

FRAMES, SCRIPTS AND A STANDARD STORY

Departmental seminar
Department of Psychology
University of
Waikato

12/10/90

Traditional work on persuasive communications distinguishes between such items as; reports, news stories, scientific articles etc and partisan communications that seek to persuade. I want to challenge the appropriateness of that distinction, at least as it might be applied to material about race, especially Pakeha-Maori relations, in this country.

To avoid waffling generalities I am structuring my argument around the news report that broke the story of the Maori unit in the Lower Hutt DSW. I will be seeking to show how this report provides a pro status-quo communication that is inconsistent with its assigned status as a factual account.

O.T.1 - the story

It is important to begin by describing the context within which this was printed. First, the Dominion Sunday Times, printed the text of a draft report leaked from the Wellington DSW that talked of "tagging" vacancies for Maori people to rectify the clear imbalance between the staff composition and the client population. Then the Dominion carried a story on the report on Monday under these headlines:

O.T.2 - the two report headlines

14 other papers ran this item, 8/14 used the phrase "Maori only" in their headline, 14/14 used the phrase "colour bar" in their first or second sentence.

Second, a suggestion was made in the report that Maori clients should be interviewed by Maori and that Maori workers should be answerable only to Maori supervisors. The comments from Dr Cullen (Minister of Social Welfare) and Mr Grant (Director of Social Welfare) rejected this as ideological, as beyond commonsense and totally unacceptable. Next day the same writer and paper publish the item we are looking at.

O.T.1

O.T.3 - the unit, in the story

What we have here is what the item reports about the unit, as distinct from the comments of Cullen and Grant about it. As is characteristic of news items this is presented as statements of fact - what happened, who did it, and what comments were made about it.

Beginning with the headline we can say that at one level "Maori welfare unit" would be an accurate label if the item were appearing in a neutral context. But Raea is writing in a context, that he had contributed to creating, in which the word Maori is functioning to identify "privileged treatment". The previous day's article raised the possibility of plans to create special (read separate or privileged) units in DSW for Maori, with considerable Maori control. So the title "Maori welfare unit" announces that such units exist, they are not merely plans. The link with such possible units is

underlined, in case you hadn't picked up the message, by the lead sentence:

"A SEPARATE Maori social work unit.."

Note the typographic emphasis created by the normal practice of capitalising the first couple of words of the lead sentence. Later in the story it is reported that the unit is "operating separatist racial policies" that are explicitly identified as "similar to those raised .. (in the) report. By these mechanisms the reader is pushed into the critical context created by the previous day's story where such units were defined as unacceptable and improper. Any reader will find it difficult to avoid being caught up in this flow, even if they recognise that they are being pushed against their better judgement.

That's all before we reach the story. Notice that the community source "confirmed" the existence of the unit and how it works. That suggests that the reporter may have gone to the source with his own story rather than being told what is happening. [cf Chris' court research] The reference to the staff ".. (being) forbidden from discussing the nature of the unit or the way it worked with those outside the department." uses a passive construction with no agent. We do not know who forbade them and this mystification allows or encourages an interpretation that the unit is closing its ranks against those who would reveal their unacceptable activities. By neither identifying the agent nor mentioning that there is a departmental policy that forbids staff from commenting on "matters of policy", Raea allows us to think that the unit is secretive and coercive in its operations, a possibility that is also raised by some

of Dr Cullen's and John Grant's remarks.

We are told that the Maori unit has "at least six full-time staff" and that they work "primarily with Maori clients". That "non-Maori social workers ... under instruction to hand over all Maori casework to the Maori unit." And that clients are "... asked .. whether they were Maori or non-Maori .." before being put through to the duty social workers. The description fits very closely with the model provided in the staffing report that had been so strongly rejected the day before.

Even if the source is not the office this account is presented as how the unit works, . There is no hint of any alternative, encouraging a reading of the report as "the facts". If we were to read the Evening Post of the following Monday, we would find that the unit allowed Maori clients to choose to be dealt with by their own people, rather than being dragooned as the report implies, and that services to Maori people had improved since the unit was started. If we read the Listener editorial of August 20 we would find that the unit arose from a community initiative.

I want to draw your attention to the adjective "separate". With its derivative separatism it is used frequently in the article but it is doubtful whether, in this context, it refers to distinct geographic locations. So why has Raea chosen to use the word? If challenged on this point he might respond that it is not an emotive or extreme description of the unit. I am sure that he would claim that he has not unduly prejudiced people's response to the unit.

Yet, of the seven editorials talking about these issues, six spoke strongly against such units because they would;

O.T.4 - phrases from editorials

create division or disharmony, deny clients access to necessary skills, or increase the Maori burden on the taxpayer. I am arguing that these writers have responded to a carefully constructed partisan message in the Raea article. And, I would identify "separate" as playing an important part in shaping that message. In a bit I am going to look at the use he makes of Cullen and Grant in clarifying his message but, first, I am going to give my account of why this superficially neutral presentation of the unit works in such an effectively partisan manner.

In his discussion of a Bob Jones article about race, in Honouring the Treaty, Tim McCreanor summarises ten themes that appear in Pakeha discourse about race. Essentially two of these are being triggered by Raea's account.

O.T.5 - One People

This is the first. You will all recognise this theme as it has been the dominant (in the musical sense) in 1990. Within this theme, Separation - the acknowledgement of cultural identity, is cast as an unnecessary and destructive challenge to a standard reading of our racial history. This Pakeha understanding, which is a standard story in the sense that Fish uses the phrase, that we are all (uniformly and primarily) citizens of one country, minimises the importance of cultural differences. This helps justify and maintain the dominance of settlers (kawanatanga) over Maori (rangatiratanga). The theme

operates to create an imbalance. The standard story does not allow that there is much justification for Maori calls or demands for services, for justice or their rights. Maori are just New Zealanders, like the rest of us, and they should direct their energy to participating more effectively as we all have to pull together. This allows speakers to represent Maori calls for justice as increasing racial tension, because of the responses that such calls draw forth from Pakeha New Zealanders. The editorial comments about divisiveness exemplify the process.

This is how this theme contributes to Raea's persuasiveness, apart from the context effects detailed earlier. Labelling the unit as "Maori" and "separate" makes Maori identity salient. People are said to be asked if they are Maori when they call. Maori people are apparently handled only by Maori staff and the non-Maori staff are required to cooperate in this process. Immediately, from our common sense social knowledge, we "know" that this is creating tension. We (Pakeha) know", for example, that there are Maori people who do not wish to be dealt with by Maori people. We "know", possibly more accurately, that non-Maori staff are feeling resentful. We "know" that callers are upset at having to label themselves in this divisive manner. Raea can tap those meanings as the editorials show, without having to use clearly emotive terms because he speaks in a widely understood way that rests on the standard story.

O.T.6 - Privilege

This is the second theme that is triggered in this account. I

have outlined how the previous day's story provided a context in which "Maori" is sufficient to trigger the judgement of privilege. As stated earlier the standard story denies that Maori were guaranteed a distinctive place in this country and minimises the extent to which the Maori economic base has been destroyed by the settlers. It follows from this notion that any "special treatment" of Maori is understood as settler generosity and to be regarded as a temporary support until Maori "catch up". Any service, support, or opportunity to participate that is apparently targetted to Maori is thus unwarranted charity and such privileges are a denial of our all being Kiwis. The editorial comments about Maori being a burden show that they are also familiar with this theme.

Okay, that's the "objective" account of what the unit is and how it operates. That part of the account has built in a number of elements that exert a persuasive effect by pushing the reader to understand the account in terms of the standard story of Pakeha-Maori relations. As a matter of course the article is able to be more partisan because the writer can quote two powerful men who provide emotional weight by responding explicitly in terms of this Pakeha standard story. At this point I must add that the outcome probably would not have been very different if Raea had quoted a pro-unit spokesperson. Tim McCreanor presented an analysis of such an item when he spoke at the Psych. Society conference. He was able to show that embedding such a speaker's words in a context shaped by the standard story undercut what was being said very effectively.

O.T.1

As we look at Cullen and Grant I want to remind you that both men had been put on the spot the day before. As reported in (Summary E), both went gone on record as saying that separatism is wrong. That was when talking about possible Maori units described in a draft report about ways to correct the staff/client imbalance in DSW. That means they don't have too many options for responding in a balanced or reasoned way.

Before presenting just the parts of the story that report Dr Cullen I draw your attention to the structure. After the headline and lead sentence we have these 5 sentences that summarise the story. What follows is the story, a series of short paragraphs that can be rearranged or deleted to suit the sub-editors requirements. For example D must, logically, refer to Grant but is "he" because the paragraph was shifted without the resultant ambiguity being noticed. Research on the construction of news stories, shows that the text can be chopped to suit the paper's needs and this sometimes creates items that are bizarrely abbreviated or, as here, ambiguous.

O.T.7 - Cullen

These are the parts of the story that report or quote Dr Cullen. I will leave aside the last section except to say that it appears to be concerned with pressurising the Minister by calling him to account for goings-on within his department. Raea quotes Cullen to do his persuasion for him. The first reported comment, which seems to appear in the form of a direct quote later, describes the unit as:

"leading down the separatist path to a liberal version of apartheid."

In NZ we are consistently reminded of the hatreds and bitternesses created by apartheid in South Africa, in contrast with the harmony suggested within the one people theme. The core understanding here of apartheid is of a minority imposing their racial ideology on everyone. Many users of the "Privilege" theme represent Maori as doing the same thing. As reported Cullen has picked up both the One People and the Privilege themes and gone to their emotional heart in this phrase. You notice it is not a direct quote, but a kind of reported speech. This is often done in news items and it appears to give the reporter more freedom to organise or interpret what is said. This presentation of the minister's position appears in the summary, foreshadowing the fuller account in the story, but it also encourages readers to get a particular understanding of the event whether they read on or stop.

In the story (Summary E), we and no doubt Dr Cullen, are first reminded of the statement he released the previous day, that such units "would not and should not" (operate in the department). What can he say? (the unit) "...would be shut down if it were found to be operating separatist racial policies." That first paragraph of the story provides a rhetorical frame for the description of the unit, one that encourages the judgement that the unit is "operating separatist racial policies".

Then we move into the quoted section of Cullen's argument. He first rejects the possibility of directing a service to "one ethnic group" as "not appropriate". (I see this as a "commonsense" corollary of the One people theme.) And then makes a contrast

between "proper biculturalism" and "a liberal version of apartheid". (Which seems to rely more on the notion of Privilege as I said earlier.) Cullen affirms that "proper biculturalism" (whatever it is) does not involve the kinds of Maori identification that the unit appears to represent and implies that Dr Cullen knows what "proper biculturalism" is. The Pakeha government, which is represented as non-partisan in the standard story, continues to set the direction for us all (including the Maori). Within the article's framework this "biculturalism" can mean little more than the addition of a few exotic touches that distinguish us and our institutions from the penal colony across the Tasman.

D.T.S - Grant

In terms of my analysis Grant's role, which he appears to accept with a measure of relief, is to comment on the running of the department leaving the minister to comment on policy. In the article's terms his role is to emphasise that the unit is an unauthorised deviation from normal practice, that it is inconsistent with existing policy of "proper biculturalism" and that the Lower Hutt office is being brought into line. That really completes the demolition job on this local initiative.

I have been arguing that this article, like other news reports, is read primarily as a factual account of what happened. As supporting evidence I am referring the use of the item by the writers of editorials. Editorials are opinion pieces that fall within the traditional boundaries of persuasive communication. The writers appear to be well aware of the impact of the perceived

authority/credibility of a source on the way the message is received and editors regularly take news reports as the "objective" foundation of their piece. Of the 7 editorials that related to the unit and the staffing report only one, the Listener, introduced material that called the Raea account in question in any respect.

Briefly summarising the editorials about the unit:-

- 5 are rejoicing that the unit will be closed, often arguing strongly that neither it nor the staffing report, should have come into being. They present the decision to close the unit as a victory for commonsense or reasonableness, while questioning the competence of DSW management.
- 1 is largely consistent with this position but focusses more on the possible impact of separatism on a "more conciliatory tone of race relations" that the writer has detected in recent months. This writer does recognise situations where such units might be useful but is clear that they should not be the norm.
- The Listener questions both the appropriateness of our commitment to the notion of being one people and the willingness of Pakeha to resolve the genuine grievances of the Maori.

Earlier I mentioned points at which the editorial writers appeared to be responding directly to the Pakeha themes Raea had used in the article. I am also arguing that the absence of alternative understandings in the editorials constitutes a strong affirmation of the perceived facticity of the original report. This has enabled the article to function as a powerful persuasive message, both drawing on

and confirming Pakeha common sense about Maori in this country.

To stop at this point might create the impression that the standard story is a juggernaut that cannot be challenged. That isn't so but it has to be said that it is difficult to undercut that common sense account successfully. In closing I am going to introduce 4 alternative frames that could have been used to warrant the unit, to legitimate its existence and way of operation. Interestingly, 3 of these are anticipated in some of the editorials, the writers presenting various counter arguments, as a kind of first strike.

Puao-te-ata-tu (1986), the Report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective in DSW, did provide considerable ammunition for this kind of change.

O.T.9 - Puao

Two editorials mention the report, the first summarises the findings like this:

O.T.10 - Evening Post

The next sentence asserts that: "appointments..related to race, drawing from the group..to have produced the most beneficiaries as if this is a qualification". This addresses the recommendation

O.T.11 - Dominion

by drawing on the Bad Maori theme. In identifying the Maori (race) qualifications as - welfare dependence by implication bludging off the (Pakeha) taxpayers, the writer has provided a quick but insubstantial reponse to the report.

The other mention is in the Dominion.

O.T.12 - Dominion in full

The response here is more subtle, the writer mentions current legislation that requires; "culturally appropriate services" and contrasts this with a "colour bar for staff appointments" which is seen as crude and "ultimately damaging". The argument is strengthened by describing the way the State Sector Act already demands that departments "recognise Maori aspirations" (etc). Finishing by reminding readers that departments must; "select suitably qualified people impartially". Here we have reliance on both the commonsense theme of being one people and the legislated concomitants of that understanding. However neither of these responses addresses the key aspect of Puao-te-ata-tu; that the Pakeha way of running the department and the (predominantly Pakeha) staff do not work effectively for a significant group of legitimate recipients. As an aside, from the work Tim and I have done, it seems likely that an important reason for such failure is that the Pakeha staff and institution are interacting with clients in terms of Pakeha commonsense. Maori workers in these settings are constantly being socialised to respond in the same way unless they work in a kaupapa Maori context. This is a self-sustaining cycle of interpretation and interaction.

Puao-te-ata-tu stands as an ^cindit_^ement of current workings but to use it to support an initiative means having to spell out the failings and to relate them to the new initiative while avoiding any of the trigger notions such as separation, dependency, and special treatment.

Second, there is Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Professor Ian Brownlie, the international jurist who gave the Robb Lectures at Auckland this year, consistently said that the Maori text is the treaty. He argued that it was the text offered for signature ie it expressed the Crown's intentions, and it was the text signed ie it expressed what the Maori agreed to. So the distinction between tino rangatiratanga and kawanatanga becomes germane and I think it is going to become more rather than less important. As expressed in the 1852 Constitution Act this legitimates

O.T.13 - LXXI

autonomy for Maori and is definitely what the writer for The Press has in mind:

O.T.14 - The Press

The writer can only dismiss this argument by asserting that it (autonomy or separate development) cannot be. I detect a degree of defensiveness in the suggestion that we should have in constitutional principles when being trained in cultural sensitivity. Clearly we would need to start with the same set of constitutional principles as the writer if we were to agree with this conclusion.

As people become more knowledgeable about the treaty and colonial history it becomes increasingly appropriate to frame initiatives in these terms. Of course that becomes problematic if the information is going to be filtered through the screen of Pakeha common sense. Those of us who are committed to change have to find the words to do this as part of our challenge to the status quo.

Third, there is the notion of merit or qualification. This is obviously related to Puao-te-ata-tu but is of greater generality. I have an impression that commonsense talk in this area pictures qualifications as objective and unchanging entities that individuals have or do not have. More rationally qualifications, abilities and merit are recognised as affected by the situation and demonstrated by effective performance. In many ways I see this as the most powerful alternative frame in which to represent new initiatives because we (Pakeha) have such a strong commitment to impartial application of merit criteria. The catch is that the skills have to be specified, they cannot be subsumed under general categories without being seen as privilege, lowering standards, or separatism.

Four editorials touched on qualifications issues. The Evening Post and Northern Advocate merely affirmed the need for impartiality and ability in appointments implying that any alternative involves lowering standards of service. The Otago Daily Times drew on commonsense about Maori Inheritance (another of the themes Tim describes)

O.T.15 - ODT

to locate the necessary qualifications in an amorphous group of "mixed-race descent". The writer asserts that mixed descent is sufficient to give affinity with the Polynesian clients presumably also of mixed descent. Obviously this doesn't represent a detailed understanding of the skills required.

The Press took a more typical position asserting that the necessary skills, identified as "cultural sensitivity", are being acquired by all staff, should be expected of all staff, and can be provided by any staff member. That Puao-te-ata-tu found it simply

didn't work that way is not mentioned. This is part of why I feel strongly that merit or qualifications can be made to work for such initiatives, there is a great deal of evidence that our colonial processes are not working, especially not for Maori. The inadequacy of subsuming such diverse skills as language, cultural competence, commitment to Maoritanga etc under the wishy-washy notion of cultural sensitivity is like saying doctors will be more human if we just improve their communication skills.

Finally such initiatives could be framed in terms of rights acknowledged in international covenants ratified by New Zealand governments. For example. Article 27 of the

O.T.16 - Article 27

International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights. I understand this to say, in language even a journalist could comprehend, that Maori people are entitled to have situations where their language and practices operate. The article would appear to be consistent with that section LXXI of the 1852 Constitution Act I showed earlier. Brownlie, the 1990 Robb lecturer, put a lot of weight on such human rights statements, mostly it seemed, because they could be subject to court action. I am very sceptical about this, primarily because NZ does not have the laws or processes for human rights litigation. Our courts see their role as interpreting the will of parliament not constraining the government. If this article were embodied in NZ law one could bring a case but, at present, it can only be part of a complaint to the Human Rights Commission. I'm speculating on the basis of limited experience at this point. What is more definite is

that no editor mentioned such national undertakings in their editorial. I reckon that means these covenants have not impinged significantly on our talk about domestic issues.

That's where I want to finish. I hope I have shown you how, at least in the area of race, "objective" news reports work persuasively for the standard story and that there are ways of presenting alternative accounts that can challenge the standard story. It is in this last respect that I hope this kind of discourse analysis will contribute to the recognition and establishment of te tino rangatiratanga of Maori people.

31 JUL 1990

PO Box 13-330, Oteuanga
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 640-453 Fax 657-607

TUESDAY

Maori welfare unit running for six months

A SEPARATE Maori social work unit has operated in Lower Hutt for at least six months without the knowledge of either Social Welfare Minister Michael Cullen or the approval of director-general John Grant.

By STEVE RAEA

The unit will be closed as soon as staff can be transferred to other jobs.

Mr Grant confirmed last night that the unit was operating and that it was in direct conflict with Social Welfare policy.

Dr Cullen, who learned of its operation only yesterday afternoon when told by The Dominion, said the unit's work was leading down the separatist path to a liberal version of apartheid.

He said he had learned of the unit only after it had been set up and then only by accident.

Both Dr Cullen and Mr Grant issued statements yesterday saying there would not, and should not, be any separate Maori social welfare units operating within the department.

Dr Cullen said he would hold immediate talks with Mr Grant to establish the nature of the Lower Hutt unit, which he said would be shut down if it were found operating separatist racial policies.

Inquiries yesterday revealed the unit had been working autonomously for at least six months and operating separatist policies similar to those raised in the Wellington district office report on Maori recruitment.

Lower Hutt community sources confirmed yesterday that the unit had at least six full-time staff who primarily dealt with Maori clients. They also revealed that non-Maori social workers, unless specifically asked, were under instruction to hand over all Maori casework to the Maori unit.

They also said clients were asked on the telephone whether they were Maori or non-Maori before being put through to duty social workers.

A Maori unit staff worker advised yesterday that she and her co-workers had been forbidden from discussing the nature of the unit or the way it worked with those outside the department.

Dr Cullen said he would discuss the unit with Mr Grant at a meeting this morning to establish why it had been allowed to set up without permission and the nature of its work.

"I do not agree with separate units of that sort. A social work unit directed towards one ethnic group is not appropriate.

"I am in favour of proper bi-

culturalism which is not the same thing as a liberal version of apartheid, which is what things will amount to if we continue down this separatist path," Dr Cullen said.

He said he had already made his views clear to Mr Grant regarding matters of preferred Maori employment and supervision canvassed in the controversial working party report first published in The Dominion Sunday Times on Sunday.

Mr Grant said he was angered by the way the unit had been set up and had expressed his desire for the unit to be abolished as soon as transfer positions arose in the department for those in the unit.

"I am annoyed Lower Hutt was set up like that, and they know that. Lower Hutt know it, and the assistant director-general knows it, and at the first available opportunity that will cease to operate in that way."

He said the unit would operate in the normal way in future.

He said the members in the Maori Unit were pulled together from existing staff and were not the successful applicants for positions tagged Maori.

Asked how a Maori unit could be formed without either ministerial or head office approval, Dr Cullen said: "Administrative matters do not normally come within the purview of the minister. The minister is here in terms of policy. The chief executive is responsible for administrative matters of that sort.

"There is a high degree of autonomy at district level. We are talking about 8000 staff and 50 different offices. However, issues of this sort do involve wider areas of policy and therefore ought to involve discussion and approval from myself."

Mr Grant, when asked the same question, said: "What do you want me to say... It happened... All I can say is that it was not policy to set it up.

"My instructions have been for some time that it is to cease operating in that way, and as far as I know there is no other district... it is not departmental policy for that to occur," he said.

As a means of beginning this process, the working party concluded that all current vacancies be tagged 'Maori'.

FROM a copy of the report first published in The Dominion Sunday Times.

Cullen rejects jobs for Maoris only

Cullen rejects any plan for colour bar

□ From p1:
... that if manor

Maori welfare unit running for six months

3

HEADLINE

LEAD SENTENCE

A SEPARATE Maori social work unit has operated in Lower Hutt for at least six months without the knowledge of either Social Welfare Minister Michael Cullen or the approval of director-general John Grant.

SUMMARY

A The unit will be closed as soon as staff can be transferred to other jobs.

By STEVE RAEA

STORY

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EDITORIALS (1)

- divisiveness which such suggestions accentuate
- they are a recipe for even more social welfare problems
- a colour bar for staff appointments .. crude .. ultimately damaging
- separatist notions .. may yet threaten the more conciliatory spirit .. in race relations
- Social Welfare Department needs .. more mixed-descent staff
- no justification for departmental appointments to be related to race lowering of standards
- select suitably qualified people impartially
- funding vehicles for racial bias
- real problem of Maori dependency on social welfare
- possibility ... Department of Social Welfare .. being regarded as a place to provide employment

ONE PEOPLE

Unless we forget our differences and unite as a single grouping called New Zealanders or Kiwis, racial tension will continue to grow. The idea of biculturalism or multiculturalism is rejected except as a way of 'enriching' the mainstream culture with a touch of the exotic.

PRIVILEGE

Maori people have special privileges in our society - that is, they have rights over and above those of the rest of the population. The four Maori seats in Parliament, the Maori Affairs Department, cheap housing loans for Maori, Maori All Blacks, special educational allowances and fishing rights are cited as examples. These privileges are viewed as racist, a form of separate treatment akin to apartheid.

Maori welfare unit running for six months

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SUMMARY
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LEAD SENTENCE

7

Social Welfare Minister Michael Cullen

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(POLICY)

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"I do not agree with separate units of that sort. A social work unit directed towards one ethnic group is not appropriate.

"I am in favour of proper biculturalism which is not the same thing as a liberal version of apartheid, which is what things will amount to if we continue down this separatist path," Dr Cullen said.

He said he had already made his views clear to Mr Grant regarding matters of preferred Maori employment and supervision canvassed in the controversial working party report first published in The Dominion Sunday Times on Sunday.

GRANT

(PRACTICE)

Asked how a Maori unit could be formed without either ministerial or head office approval, Dr Cullen said: "Administrative matters do not normally come within the purview of the minister. The minister is here in terms of policy. The chief executive is responsible for administrative matters of that sort.

"There is a high degree of autonomy at district level. We are talking about 8000 staff and 50 different offices. However, issues of this sort do involve wider areas of policy and therefore ought to involve discussion and approval from myself."

UNIT

without the knowledge of
director-general John Grant.

LEAD SENTENCE

SUMMARY

B Mr Grant confirmed last night that the unit was operating and that it was in direct conflict with Social Welfare policy.

E Both Dr Cullen and Mr Grant issued statements yesterday saying there would not, and should not, be any separate Maori social welfare units operating within the department.

STORY

↓ UNIT

CULLEN

(PRACTICE)

Mr Grant said he was angered by the way the unit had been set up and had expressed his desire for the unit to be abolished as soon as transfer positions arose in the department for those in the unit.

"I am annoyed Lower Hutt was set up like that, and they know that. Lower Hutt know it, and the assistant director-general knows it, and at the first available opportunity that will cease to operate in that way."

He said the unit would operate in the normal way in future.

He said the members in the Maori Unit were pulled together from existing staff and were not the successful applicants for positions tagged Maori.

CULLEN

(REPAIR)

Mr Grant, when asked the same question, said: "What do you want me to say... It happened... All I can say is that it was not policy to set it up.

"My instructions have been for some time that it is to cease operating in that way, and as far as I know there is no other district... it is not departmental policy for that to occur," he said.

without the knowledge of

LEAD SENTENCE

7

Social Welfare Minister Michael Cullen

SUMMARY

C Dr Cullen, who learned of its operation only yesterday afternoon when told by The Dominion, said the unit's work was leading down the separatist path to a liberal version of apartheid.

D He said he had learned of the unit only after it had been set up and then only by accident.

E Both Dr Cullen and Mr Grant issued statements yesterday saying there would not, and should not, be any separate Maori social welfare units operating within the department.

Dr Cullen said he would hold immediate talks with Mr Grant to establish the nature of the Lower Hutt unit, which he said would be shut down if it were found operating separatist racial policies.

Story

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(POLICY)

Dr Cullen said he would discuss the unit with Mr Grant at a meeting this morning to establish why it had been allowed to set up without permission and the nature of its work.

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UNIT

"Staff/client relations, staffing recruitment, cultural misunderstanding and other problems are the tip .. of a huge iceberg ... difficulties experienced by Maori people in their interaction with the department snowball ... could indicate that a major reassessment rather than minor adjustments are needed"

Puao - Te - Ata - Tu (1986)

Evening Post

Puao-te-ata-Tu (Daybreak), the booklet published in 1986 after the deliberations of the ministerial advisory committee on a Maori perspective for the Department of Social Welfare. Daybreak criticised the scarcity of Maori people departmentally employed and wanted transference of authority over the use of resources closer to the consumer. An emphasis on the professionalism of social workers and their academic training was seen as discriminating against Maori people.

There is no justification for departmental appointments to be related to race, drawing from the group which has the misfortune to have produced most beneficiaries as if this is a qualification.

Puao-te-ata-tu

In our view it is essential for the department to recruit more social workers who are Maori or who are knowledgeable and sensitive to Maoritanga."

Dominion

The working party professes to develop its approach from Puaoteata-tu (Daybreak), the 1986 report advising on a Maori perspective for the department.

The findings certainly point to racial imbalances in staffing, appointment, promotion and training practices. But in calling for them to be redressed, Puaoteata-tu specifically rejects the solution now subterraneously in vogue: "We were told that the absence of brown faces inhibits Maori clients of the department and we accept this. However we are not convinced that the answer to such problems lies in the wholesale recruitment of Maori staff . . . In our view it is essential for the department to recruit more social workers who are Maori or who are knowledgeable and sensitive to Maoritanga."

Legislation underlines this positive concern for the clientele, requiring "culturally appropriate services" for the various sections of the community. A colour bar for staff appointments would be a crude and ultimately damaging way to further this goal.

Anyway, under the State Sector Act the department could not tag jobs for people of a particular race even if it wanted to.

LXXI

And whereas it may be expedient that the Laws, Customs, and Usages of the aboriginal or native Inhabitants of New Zealand, so far as they are not repugnant to the general Principles of Humanity, should for the present be maintained for the Government of themselves, in all their Relations to and Dealings with each other, and that particular Districts should be set apart within which such Laws, Customs, or Usages should be so observed.

The Press

Some radical and demonstrably silly interpretations of the Treaty of Waitangi have been put forward, sometimes by those engaged to make departmental staff more culturally sensitive. In other cases the thinking is simply sloppy.

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Attitudes to the Treaty of Waitangi seem to underpin some of the prevalent assumptions. Since the profile of the Treaty has been raised, one of the strands of thinking that has emerged many times is that the Treaty provides for power sharing, often interpreted as an equal division of resources. That is not a well grounded view of the Treaty and certainly paves the way for some form of Maori autonomy or separate development.

Otago Daily Times

It is no more helpful to describe mixed-descent people as Maori than it is to describe them as European. Unless their dual identity is fully and continually reinforced, part of the major problem of identity is never tackled. What the Social Welfare Department needs is not more Maori staff, but more mixed-descent staff — for they are the people who will have the most affinity with the majority of the department's clients of Polynesian descent. And that will inevitably give the department a practical identity instead of the sterility of separatist misnomers.

ARTICLE 27

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.