

DRAFT

## Introduction

When Project Waitangi was established in 1986, a need was seen for a campaign that would address an emerging yet confused understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi amongst the Pakeha population. Since the mid-70's and particularly during 1985 and 1986, the Treaty had come more into the Pakeha arena with the changes in the Waitangi Tribunal and the many claims being brought into the public eye. The group that formed Project Waitangi had come from many years experience in anti-racism work which always had a very structural and political base. Project Waitangi, therefore, began with the assumption that education regarding the Treaty was education for change that would focus on issues of control, power and resources. It would not be just a consciousness-raising campaign about the Treaty.

The National core group began with a philosophy which could be grouped into three areas:

1. There is a role for Pakeha in a Treaty-based Aotearoa.  
The Treaty was seen largely as an issue for Maori and about Maori. Project Waitangi's task was to expose and explore the Treaty of Waitangi as a Pakeha issue.
2. Pakeha have a responsibility to work for change.  
Pakeha have been the beneficiaries of breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi by the Crown since 1840. Therefore, we saw it to be the Crown's responsibility to remedy the situation and since Pakeha control the Crown, this responsibility belongs to all Pakeha.
3. It is possible for Pakeha to change. We started with this assumption, unlike much of the anti-racism training of the 70's and early 80's which presumed Pakeha were unwilling and unable to change, which tended to provoke Pakeha guilt and paralysis.

## Target group

Our target group was identified as "middle New Zealand". When analysing the attitudes in society, about 10% were committed to a Treaty-based future (in one form or another), another 10% were arch bigots and would remain that way. That left about 80% of New Zealanders with whom we felt our Project could have the most impact.

## Style

The style of Project Waitangi was always to promote the positive benefits of honouring the Treaty, and to run our education campaign with this focus. We recognised that there was

growing fears and much confusion about the impact of the Treaty and the issues it brought up. Media sensationalism fuelled these fears and knee-jerk reactions were common. Many of the fears and confusion were based on lack of knowledge or understanding of basic terms, e.g. apartheid, separate development, partnership, etc. Our resource material has provided easy-to-read, straight-forward information on the Treaty and has tried to tap the New Zealand "sense of fairplay and goodwill".

The negativity of some groups involved in the issues on all sides has provoked both Pakeha backlash and Pakeha guilt. Alongside this has been the portrayal by some groups of Maori as being victims (and staying victims) in an ever-oppressive Pakeha dominated society. Project Waitangi did not want to go down this track and resisted actions or events that promoted this.

### The Moving Debate

Over the past four years we have seen the debate about the Treaty changing. In 1985/86, those of us involved in Treaty education were in the mode of persuading people that injustice had occurred in New Zealand since 1840, that there were grievances and that the consequences of these still exist. Also, very few Pakeha people knew much more about the Treaty than it was signed in 1840.

By 1990, the debate had certainly moved. Many more Pakeha have read the Treaty, discussed it with others and have a basic understanding that there have been serious breaches of it since 1840. The debate now, rather than being concentrated on proving the case, focusses on the dimension and relevance of the Treaty. Questions now asked are: "given there has been injustices, what does the Treaty mean for a modern world?" and "What is Pakeha responsibility with regard to the Treaty, what does it mean in terms of employment, housing, land etc?".

### Has Treaty education for Pakeha made any difference?

What is a difference? In terms of Project Waitangi's purpose and philosophy, a difference would be a transfer of power and resources and decision-making to Maori.

The Pakeha response:

There has been positive change. Clearly attitudes have moved and there is now much more acceptance of the Treaty of Waitangi. There are some Treaty-based structural models, operating mainly in groups from the community sector. At a Government level, while recognising the considerable backsliding on the Treaty, there are some changes that should not be underestimated. These

can be seen in specific areas like employment policies, corporate plans, consultation with Maori, staff training, and so on. Five years ago, many of the accepted practices today, both in the community and government sectors, would have been seen as very radical indeed.

There has been a negative response. The right-wing rump of New Zealand has come out to defend their racist position - groups like the One New Zealand foundation have been formed. Maori-bashing by politicians, media and self-appointed experts has become almost acceptable, if not inevitable. The more sinister side of these reactionary positions occurs when the people who espouse these views have control and power in their organisations or in Government. They are the people who actively or passively block change and have much influence over the options chosen and the directions taken.

Another manifestation of a negative response is the ability to espouse rhetoric on the Treaty, but be unwilling (or unable) to put anything into practice. This can be seen in the mountain of Government reports regarding the Treaty done in the last few years, where genuine alternatives and solutions have been recommended, but on the whole no changes are made. This has also extended to sophisticated redefinition of the Treaty by some groups so that it fits into their criteria and norms.

All the Treaty education in the world may not necessarily make any difference to the real wheelers and dealers of New Zealand, i.e. those with the economic power. The only way this group will move is when the economic realities change. This is where the resourcing of iwi will be crucial over the next period.

When Project Waitangi began, there was an analogy used which I always found helpful: With the changes in political thinking and societal attitudes, the door to a Treaty-based future had been unlocked and pushed open a little. Groups like Project Waitangi and the numerous Maori groups were trying to put their foot in the door, before it was slammed shut by those working actively against this kind of progress. Collectively, we did get our foot in the door and pushed it open even further. But, of course, once you open a door like this one, a huge range of options and visions are exposed. The task now is to begin to explore those options and accept that there are going to be many different ways, both for Maori and Pakeha, to identify, define and create a Treaty-based Aotearoa.