

PROJECT WAITANGI AND 1990

From the beginning of Project Waitangi, 1990 has been part of our focus. One of our aims was that, through a community-based education programme, the nation would be in a better position to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.

In May, following discussions with the NCC Programme on Racism, and some Government contacts, Project Waitangi prepared a well-documented submission to the Government, focussing on the formation and personnel of a 1990 Commission, and some specific ideas for the year itself. We said that the group planning the Year must live out, in their composition and way of working, the partnership which is foreshadowed in the Treaty of Waitangi. We called for Maori-Pakeha co-convenorship of the Commission, and 50/50 Maori/Tauiwi membership.

In September we learned that a group had been called together by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Michael Bassett, to brainstorm ideas for 1990. We learned that:

- * the Prime Minister attended the meeting
- * of approximately 24 invitees, 5 were Maori
- * the Mayors of Wellington, Christchurch, Auckland and Dunedin were invited, but none could attend.

Project Waitangi sent the following telegram to the Minister, and a letter, requesting to meet with him:

"1990 is the year to commemorate the Treaty of Waitangi which pledged equal partnership between Maori and Pakeha. Project Waitangi urges the 1990 Commission to reflect this partnership in its composition, method of working, projects and distribution of resources. We offer our support to making the Treaty ideals a reality so 1990 can be a true celebration of our bicultural identity."

We have since heard that at the meeting:

- there was a strong recommendation made that absolute and total priority be given to the Treaty of Waitangi
- it was recommended that the Minister immediately establish a bicultural secretariat to coordinate planning for the Year
- the group felt they were not the right people to oversee the planning and they would probably not meet again
- the idea was floated that a celebration of the Treaty may not be in order, given the unresolved conflicts which still exist.

Project Waitangi's concerns are:

1. That the Minister's statement following the meeting placed the Treaty of Waitangi alongside a wide range of other events - the Queen's visit, the Commonwealth Games, city centennials etc. - in other words, we fear that a clear focus on the Treaty will be dissipated amongst a raft of other matters.
2. It is still not clear what will be the makeup of the secretariat and/or the Commission. The meeting recommended that Internal Affairs appoint them.

With the planning still at an early stage, we hope groups and individuals will send clear messages to the Government.

1. The central reason for a national celebration in 1990 is the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.
2. That the planning and implementation of the Year live out the principles of the Treaty: co-equal Maori/Tauiwi numbers and input and equal focus and resources for Maori and Pakeha events.
3. We want to see the anniversary year take place in the context of a clear commitment by the Government: to acknowledge and make good past breaches of the Treaty; to help Maori and Pakeha celebrate their own cultures and discover what each brings to a bicultural partnership; to set in place Treaty-based models in all the institutions of our society.

P.S. Mr Bassett (Sept. 28th) says he is unable to meet us at present.