



Conference of Churches
in Aotearoa-New Zealand

PROGRAMME ON RACISM

P.O.Box 9573
Newmarket
Auckland

Tel: (09) 5205-499
5205-450

TO ECUMENICAL FRIENDS, ECUNETS, LOCAL
COUNCILS OF CHURCHES, JPDS, AND OTHER
ALLIES.

18 SEPTEMBER 1990

Dear Friends,

No doubt you have been following with interest the publicity about the Tino Rangatiratanga Register.

Some people have asked for resources to help them speak up constructively when opportunities arise to join the discussion, either privately or publicly.

I enclose a copy of the original press release, which makes some points which have not always been taken up in media coverage. Other documents which may fill in some of the background for you are:

Press releases from the Executive of the Conference of Churches and the Auckland Catholic JPD Commission

Question and Answer sheet about the Register

Backgrounder on Te Tino Rangatiratanga

In discussions, there are some points which it is usually helpful to make.

I need hardly emphasise to you that this decision was not taken lightly by Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga i Nga Hahi o Aotearoa, that it rests on a solid theological base and that it was researched and discussed for several years, but remind you that this can be a good starting point.

Apart from making theological points about biblical justice, gospel values and moral and ethical considerations, with some people it is helpful to make links with other liberation struggles and reflect on the fact that electoral boycotts are a recognised strategy and have been used on several occasions in other countries. The withholding of a vote in a particular election may be a group's way of making a strong statement.

Some people are relieved to be reminded that this initiative is perfectly legal. While voting is an important part of the democratic process, few would claim that our present

democratic process is perfect! In fact there are strong moves for electoral reform. Groups like Te Runanga are saying that electoral reform needs to happen at a constitutional level, in order to carry out the undertakings of the Treaty of Waitangi. Sometimes it's a good idea to find out how familiar people are with the Treaty of Waitangi, and do a little remedial work around that.

Many people are having difficulty with the basic idea that the political system consists at best of political patronage and dependency for Maori people. Listen in the discussion for phrases like "...surely Labour has done more for Maori people..." "Maori have been given" "...has allowed more Maori people to" These indicate just how the present electoral and political system leaves Maori people dependent on the discretion and patronage of Pakeha parties. Such phrases don't match up with the promise of te tino rangatiratanga in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The best response to questions about Mana Motuhake are along the lines that four seats in a majority rule system are nothing like te tino rangatiratanga. Again, the need for reform of the electoral system at a more basic constitutional level.

When Pakeha people ask what they can do, I suggest that we say there is a range of options. Yes, Pakeha can sign the Register. "People of goodwill" are invited to sign the Register instead of voting, so those who decide not to vote are certainly welcome to sign the Register in support of Te Tino Rangatiratanga.

Many Pakeha will not feel comfortable about not voting, and I don't think we should encourage people who intend to vote to sign the Register. However, this doesn't mean that they aren't people of goodwill!

Other Pakeha can still speak well of the Register, and say that it seems like a responsible option for Maori people at this time. If some would like to make a financial contribution towards the costs of the advertisements, encourage them to do so. Cheques can be sent to Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga i Nga Hahi o Aotearoa, Box 9792, Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland).

I will mail other information to you as it comes to hand.
All good wishes,

Mitzi Nairn

Mitzi Nairn
Director