



The National Council of Churches in New Zealand

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PRESS RELEASE

WE HAVE REACHED A TURNING POINT IN THAT THE OBSERVANCE HAS MOVED TO WELLINGTON

The National Council of Churches remains opposed to any celebration ceremonies on Waitangi Day.

"On Waitangi Day, 1986, the issue is still the Treaty itself", said the General Secretary, Mrs Jocelyn Armstrong in Christchurch today.

"For some years, successive General and Executive Meetings of the NCC have called for a moratorium on any celebrations", said Mrs Armstrong. "We believe there is a need for urgent discussions among Pakeha people on our responsibilities under the Treaty and that should lead on to Maori-Pakeha discussions about the future."

"It is inappropriate to celebrate, even if the observance is in Wellington, the Treaty which, quite clearly, remains a source of injustice and disquiet, especially in the matter of land and the monocultural nature of our nation's institutions. This is borne out by the impossible situation of the Waitangi Tribunal. With 29 cases pending, the Tribunal were able to handle only three during 1985 and they are not yet complete. Where are the resources for a permanent full-time Tribunal?"

The NCC acknowledges that it is not inappropriate for the Waitangi Day observance to move to Wellington because it is the seat of government where Pakeha past and present actions and their results for Maori people, must be urgently reviewed. And in 1986 the Bill of Rights is being considered in Wellington.

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"The Bill of Rights will safeguard individual rights. But we in New Zealand/Aotearoa already have a Treaty which should take pre-eminence over a Bill of Rights. The Treaty lays down the rights of two peoples within one nation. In the 1986 legislation, therefore, we must urge the government to recognise the Treaty in law as the primary Bill of Rights for the nation."

"The Treaty remains the basis of the relationship between Maori and Pakeha. Within a bicultural, bilingual society, Maori processes and priorities must command no less weight than the currently dominant Pakeha processes, practices and priorities", added Mrs Armstrong.

The Wellington ceremonies have been described by the Minister of Lands as giving added focus to this 1986 International Year of Peace. The NCC response is that there can be no peace without justice. Rather than "celebrating" we should as a nation be listening and responding to the calls for change from many directions. There are moves towards justice for Maori people in education, the media, health, employment, etc. which demand our acknowledgement and further action.

"We have reached a Turning Point in that the national observance has moved to Wellington", said Mrs Armstrong.

"Our hope for the future is that we will be able to return to Waitangi for a true celebration of a bicultural nation where justice for Maoridom is a reality."

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Resolution of the N.C.C. General Meeting
held at St John's College, Auckland , August 1985.

9:2 It was moved and seconded:

THAT this General Meeting notes with regret that the 1985 observance of Waitangi Day at the Treaty House grounds did not differ substantially from previous years, except for the greater use of the Maori language in the service. We therefore endorse the remit made at the 1984 General Meeting of NCC:-

THAT in order to facilitate widespread discussion of the related issues among Pakeha people, as among Maori people, this General Meeting of the National Council of Churches calls for a moratorium on the present form of commemoration of Waitangi Day. (It is understood that the moratorium will end when the form of commemoration is changed).

CARRIED

9:3 It was moved and seconded

THAT this General Meeting asks the Church and Society Commission to continue its watching brief on the commemoration of Waitangi Day.

CARRIED