

Yearly Meeting Minute on BI-CULTURAL ISSUES 1988-89

In considering our response as a religious body to Maori calls for justice, and to rethinking of the Pakeha place in this country, we reaffirm our commitment to social justice based on the belief that there is that of God in every one. This compels us to acknowledge the rights of the indigenous people, the Maori, as tangata whenua.

We are conscious that it has taken us a considerable time to come to this understanding, but our traditions require us to be in unity before making statements in the name of the Religious Society of Friends as a whole. We are now satisfied, after discussions locally and in our Yearly Meeting, that we are ready to make this commitment.

(a) We recognise the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a living document fundamental to the life of this nation, and we commit ourselves to the principle of partnership which it embodies. This is in accord with our longstanding commitment to social equality and peaceable co-operation. We accept that honouring the Treaty will have implications for our personal and collective lives. We cannot yet know in detail what this will mean for the Religious Society of Friends, but we acknowledge that it will certainly involve equitable sharing of resources and giving up by Pakeha of exclusive decision-making in the institutions of society.

(b) We call upon all our Meetings and individual members to recognise this commitment by becoming better informed about Maoritanga and the bicultural history of this country, and by seeking ways of expressing this partnership in action.

(c) On our side of the partnership we recognise the values of the European basis of Pakeha culture, including our Quaker heritage.

(d) The building of a just partnership between Pakeha and Maori lays a sound foundation for relationships with diverse ethnic groups in this country.

(e) We welcome the efforts that the Government is making to resolve disputes between Maori and the Crown on the basis of the Treaty. We urge the Government to implement the recommendations of the Waitangi Tribunal. We call upon the Government to carry out in 1989 and 1990 a campaign to educate the community about the Treaty of Waitangi, and to broaden understanding of its implications. We call upon local communities likewise to recognise the Treaty of Waitangi, and to address sources of Maori grievance in their area, using decision-making methods that include genuine partnership with the local Maori people. We hope these actions will assist in reaffirming the dignity and sense of identity of all New Zealanders.

(f) We agree to issue publicly and to circulate among other religious bodies in New Zealand and Friends worldwide, a statement embodying sections (a) to (e) of this minute.