

Statement on Māori-Pākehā issues made by Yearly Meeting 1995

As members of Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri, the Religious Society of Friends, meeting at its annual business meeting in Christchurch at this critical moment in Māori -Pākehā relationships, we affirm our commitment to the promise of a Treaty-based relationship between our peoples, and confidence in the future of our life together.

We recognise the historic wrong done to Māori by the Crown's failure to act in accordance with the Treaty. Pākehā New Zealanders are perhaps better able to begin to appreciate the effects of Māori dispossession after our more recent experience of government action to sell off public assets and restructure health and education. To some of these changes, Māori claims have been the only effective resistance.

In spite of the rejection by Māori of the Crown's recent unilateral proposals for settling Treaty of Waitangi claims, the process of discussion has had some positive results in the unified articulation of what Māori regard as the real issues, and in the opportunity for them to meet members of the Government face to face to voice their deeply-felt hurt and anger.

For many New Zealanders this has been a disquieting experience. We understand the apprehension. However we also recognise the extreme frustration experienced by Māori tribes and people, especially those of the younger generation, at the lack of real progress towards redressing historical grievances.

This has led some of them to assert dramatically, by their physical presence on disputed land, their claim to the rangatiratanga (uncontested authority) guaranteed by the Treaty which their ancestors signed.

We acknowledge that this guarantee has not yet been honoured in more than 150 years. We believe that now is a most opportune time to start working towards new constitutional arrangements to give effect to the Treaty. These would reflect the status of Māori as tāngata whenua in this country, with the same right to self-determination as other indigenous peoples of the world.

We are convinced that there is nothing to fear from the prospect of Māori being empowered to take control of their own affairs and manage them in their own ways. In the words of the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, "Indigenous peoples have the right of selfdetermination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

It is not surprising that there should be misunderstandings and breakdowns of communication. We are always heartened by evidence from around the country that these barriers can be surmounted, and satisfactory solutions found to apparently intractable disagreements. We call on all people of goodwill to look for reconciliation beyond the confrontations, and on the Government to pursue with sensitivity and vigour its search for the justice in accordance with the Treaty without which there can be no peace.