

Tu Tangata magazine closes down

He Ohaki

Tu Tangata magazine ceases publication with this issue. The publishers, the Department of Maori Affairs, say the bi-monthly Tu Tangata magazine is not a cost effective way of publicising the department's programmes and services and instead opted for a free monthly mail-out newsletter.

Department secretary, Tamati Reedy says while he is aware of the tremendous thirst for information in the Maori community, he believes an official newsletter will give better value for money and quicker information.

He says whereas Tu Tangata magazine carried articles from a variety of sources in the community, the newsletter will emphasis information from Maori Affairs.

Former assistant secretary, Neil Prichard, who has since taken up another job, said the cost of producing the magazine every two months was not a factor in the decision to close it down. Nor was the independent stance of the editorial in its sometimes critical comment on Government actions, a factor in the decision.

However he said that the department didn't necessarily see it had a role in providing independent comment on Maori Affairs programmes. He said it's intended to print between 12 and 16 thousand copies of the monthly newsletter.

From the Editor

The decision to close Tu Tangata magazine comes as a blow to those in the Maori world who subscribed and read the magazine. It was the only independent voice for the people, and those who have contributed over its six years of publication would know this best.

It's had its knockers and critics mostly because it was published by a government department, Maori Affairs. Some

critics, have told the editor they didn't read it because it was just a propaganda machine for the department. Unfortunately for them, their prejudice was stronger than their thirst for information.

On the other hand, it has been the department that has paid the bills, while being only too aware at times that Tu Tangata was not a departmental propaganda tool.

The editor's approach from the start in 1981 was to gather news about Maori people and present it to a predominantly Maori readership. I anticipated that some of the newsmakers would be department staff because of their work with Maori people, along with prominent community people.

However I found that because of the Maori suspicion of the Pakeha media, these people were also uncomfortable with using a Maori medium, Tu Tangata, to get their message across.

Fortunately, not all Maori people were like this and several department people like Iri Tawhiwhirangi, Robin Hapi, Wishie Jaram, Moehau Reedy, the late Joe Karetai, Peter Little, John Gill and others have made use of Tu Tangata.

And the Maori people, from rangatahi and pakeke through to kaumatua have responded over the past six years with letters of support and criticism, articles, jottings, poems and appeals.

From gathering news involving Maori people, Tu Tangata has moved through to putting a Maori perspective on a whole range of take, from how Maori business can be used as whanau base to provide jobs and not just profit, to how the Goods and Services Tax affects the koha on marae.

At times it has been hard to take an independent stance on some of the issues such as the Nga Kaiwhakapumau I Te

Reo take regarding Maori language being placed before the Waitangi Tribunal. But I believe Maori and Pakeha readers have benefited by the placing of information before them that was unavailable in the Pakeha newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

The low priority of tikanga Maori in New Zealand and consequently the low status of the Maori people is reflected and compounded by their absence or poor handling in the Pakeha controlled media.

That's the message frequently given in letters to the editor, as Maori and Pakeha people discover how they've allowed the media to tell them what they're worth. The emergence of another Maori voice, Te Karare on February 21, 1983, was welcomed by Tu Tangata and as it has increased its time-slot, Maori and Pakeha people are finding out more and more about each other.

A Heylen survey commissioned by Tu Tangata magazine last year showed a large potential readership for the magazine. Many people found the present coverage of Maori news by the Pakeha media inadequate, and wanted more news about Maori activities on all media. It is rather tragic that at a time when many Maori and Pakeha people are acknowledging a thirst for information about Maori take, Tu Tangata magazine has to close.

I believe the need for an independent Maori magazine is stronger than ever. Subscribers over the past six years, bookstall buyers, along with kohanga reo have shown their financial commitment. However this support alone was not enough to carry the magazine.

It remains for the 400-thousand or so people who claimed Maori ancestry in the last census to figure out where their commitment lies now.