

pact on the daily life of the country. That even Maori greetings are uttered in strangled embarrassment in everyday life.

Absence of gestures.

This absence of even gestures to the Maori way is at the root of the Mana Motuhake discontent. "There is no difference between the Health Department in Whitehall (London) and the Health Department in Wellington."

Mat Rata's breakaway from traditional two-party politics reflected the undertow of dissatisfaction in many quarters by the continual East-West variation in values. Under Norman Kirk, Mat Rata seemed to surge along, powered by a renaissance of the Maori ethic. He became an influential cabinet member. Kirk listened to what he had to say. Then came Norman Kirk's death, and Rata came to believe that Maori values were not receiving the prominence they deserved. He began to slide in influence — and then off the front bench of the opposition.

Surfing in.

Rata's greatest task in his new bid for political power is to break the grasp of the two political parties. Even John A. Lee never found a seat as an independent. But now Mat Rata may be surfing in on changing times. There is a new central party in Great Britain.

Social Credit MP Gary Knapp has called for disaffected National and Labour party MPs to get together to form a new party.

The argument over trade union allegiance has split the Labour Party and isolated its leader Bill Rowling from the bulk of his official party. The old two party system that dominated New Zealand politics for half a century is beginning to shift and crack.

Moderate portrayal.

Strategically, the Mana Motuhake leadership appears now to be anxious to portray itself as moderate. It is also committed to the retention of the Maori seats. The future of the four Maori seats now seems to be at the same

crossroads as when the dying prophet Tahupotiki Wiremu Ratana determined their succession.

Ratana told his followers that he was dividing his body into four quarters. Each quarter representing a Maori electorate. Each seat for one of his disciples. Thanks to the support of the Labour Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage the prophesy came true.

Savage was not to realise the longer term effects of this Labour/Ratana pact. Though Labour, of course, wins the seats in successive elections, the seats contain far more votes than is needed to keep them out of the hands of National.

If these votes were re-directed to marginal general seats, would they ultimately result in more seats than the safe Maori one? It remains one of the biggest question marks in politics.

Drawn in.

Rata and his followers believe that the Members of Parliament from the Maori electorates inevitably become drawn into Western-style representation. They lose touch with the people and their aspirations.

Following the 1981 general election, Mat Rata has proved one thing. He is the nosecone of an active, potentially powerful organisation. His problem though remains very close to the problems of the party he foresook. He must be moderate enough to attract the bulk of the electorate, and radical enough to win the support of the activists, the reformers, the single-ideal people who change things.

There are some aspects of life he and his party are definite about. Perhaps the most important is that he wants the Treaty of Waitangi ratified. "We want to know what it is that we have signed. We really do not know. So we say 'let's sit down together.'"

Precedence.

He sees an historical precedent in the ratification of the Treaty, noting that the Magna Carta was never ratified until hundreds of years later when the Bill of Rights was passed through

the British Parliament. He believes that Maori representatives and the Crown should once again sit down and evaluate the Treaty and its points.

Chiefly, though, he wants acknowledgement of the Maori influence to permeate all aspects of New Zealand life. "The attitude is 'put a few more brown faces in, start a special unit'." He believes that it should be made a point of law that people look after their elderly.

Conversely, he notes that parents should be compelled to be responsible for their children — an antidote to the gang problem. He believes that traditional Maori family standards should become part of the fabric of everyday life of both races.

Youth bulk.

One set of statistics troubles him especially. It is the extreme youth of the bulk of the Maori population. He estimates three times the youth as an average over the population as a whole. "So they should be getting three times the assistance." He wonders aloud why the skill centres in New Plymouth, Palmerston North and Christchurch were closed.

He brushes aside past programmes to cope with Maori youth as "cosmetics". The Government, he says, is "bluffing".

For Mat Rata, the honey-tongued former truck driver, the objective is to convince enough people that it is not enough to have the Maori Way merely an adjunct to daily life, a concert culture. He wants them to believe that Maori traditions must be built into the very fabric of life and become an integral part of everything we do. He wants a recognition that we live deep in the South Pacific, as far as a man can go before turning back.

The Maori heritage, he believes, "presents New Zealand with a social alternative." Years ago now during his term as Minister of Maori Affairs he once defined his attitude toward a grasp of the Maori alternative this way. "You are a Maori if you believe yourself to be," he said.

