

PETER TAPSELL became MP for Eastern Maori in the last General Election. Already a well known figure in Rotorua and the Bay of Plenty and widely known in the Maori world he has rapidly achieved a high profile in national politics — certainly higher than most first-term Members of Parliament. He was quickly recognised by the media as a person of independent and vigorous opinion which he is willing and able to articulate. As a result he has little difficulty in gaining a wide coverage for his views. Although regarded on many issues as a conservative he early demonstrated a capacity to cut across all shades of Maori political opinion with his crusade to modify the procedures for the release of deceased persons to their families for tangi. The frustration of his Private Members Bill



Stephen O'Regan (left) and Peter Tapsell. Photo Joe Hughes.

Maori Health and Education

An interview with Peter Tapsell MP for the PPTA Journal by Stephen O'Regan, Senior Lecturer in Maori Studies at Wellington Teachers College.

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by Parliamentary procedures and his continuing efforts in this issue have only served to solidify an increasing base of Maori support for Tapsell. Maori resentment at the operation of the Post-Mortem Regulations is widespread and runs very deep. To be so clearly identified with an important Maori cultural issue — so early in his Parliamentary career — can be seen as an indicator of his political instinct and his 'feel' for the Maori electorate.

He recently moved to centre-stage again to challenge Jim Anderton for the Presidency of the Labour Party. The challenge, viewed by some as verging on impertinence, is just another example of Peter Tapsell reminding the Party of the Maori presence and that the Maori vote is not simply a passive Labour vote. Politics is not, however, a new area for Tapsell. He has had a long and thorough apprenticeship in Local Government having served as a Member and then three terms as Deputy Mayor of the Rotorua City Council. He has served as Chairman of the Maori Arts and Crafts Institute in Rotorua and as a Member of the Waikato University Council and the Hamilton Teachers College Council. Nationally, he has been a Member of the Physical Environment Conference, the Tourist

Development Council, the Maori Advisory Council of Health and Deputy Chairman of the Council for Sport and Recreation. He is currently Chairman of a major Maori authority, the Ngati Whakaue Tribal Lands Incorporation.

By Profession Peter Tapsell is an Orthopaedic Surgeon. He graduated from Otago University Medical School in 1954 on completion of a Ngarimu Scholarship and, after working in various New Zealand hospitals, he went to the UK in 1958 to pursue post-graduate studies. After gaining both an FRCS (Edin) and an FRCS (Eng) he returned to Rotorua in 1961 to take up appointments at the Rotorua and Queen Elizabeth Hospitals. His professional writing and speaking has taken him to Asia and the US and he has written extensively on Maori Health and the re-organisation of the health services.

He has played Rugby for NZ Universities and Otago. In 1954 he was Vice Captain of the Maori All Blacks on their tour of Fiji. He was awarded the MBE in 1968 and the Queens Jubilee Medal in 1977. He lives in Rotorua and is married with four children two of whom are at Secondary School there. Another is doing Medical Intermediate in Dunedin and his eldest is at University in Moscow.

This extensive background lies behind his frequent public statements on a wide range of issues many of which range beyond his Maori Parliamentary responsibilities.

STEPHEN O'REGAN is Senior Lecturer in Maori Studies at the Wellington Teachers College where he is currently Chairman of the Department of Social Studies and Maori. He has taught there since 1968. He is author of numerous articles and contributions in Maori-Pakeha relations, Maori traditional history and Maori land matters. His doctoral studies are on migration tradition. He is Chairman of the Mawhera Incorporation and a Member of the Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board.

O'REGAN: In recent years there has accumulated a mass of reports and recommendations on the issues of Social Education, Maori Education, Multicultural Education, Maori Health and the social and cultural condition of Maori people. Some of these — the Johnson Report, 'He Huarahi', 'Te Tatai Hono', for instance — emphasise recurrent themes, they reinforce each other. I want to pursue some of these essential messages that come through and get your perception of them. One of the most stressful realities we are confronted with is the spiralling failure