

readily. More importantly though, it could be a powerful factor in directing the awareness of teachers to the issue of cultural identity and their job futures might provide some motivation for action and involvement beyond that awareness. The curriculum shift I suggest could, perhaps, re-orient our schools for the benefit of both Pakeha and Maori children.

Another important aspect is that of the teacher's involvement in the world of the pupils beyond the classroom — in supporting their sports, in community activities. The teacher who travels with children on school trips, who relates with interest to them as people can have enormous influence for good — far more than many teachers think. I know that Maori parents and their children place a high value on such involvement, on such relationships. It is perhaps more important to many of them than classroom results.

However, to return to your question, the tide of failure as you call it results from the accumulation of social and cultural experience over generations — the school has been only one contributor to it. Turning that tide will take decades and again the school can only be one of the contributors, albeit an important one. I believe it could be much more important than it is now.

Ultimately it is a family matter. Identity and positive attitudes — that self-esteem — can only derive from what we Maori people do for ourselves. As a people we have to pull ourselves up with our own bootstraps, on our own terms. We have a right, though to expect the school to assist us in that.

**O'REGAN:** Where do you see the Maori cultural community — the marae centre, the Maori community in the city with its urban marae and its competition groups...?

**TAPSELL:** It really hasn't had a very big influence over the last decade. I think we have over-emphasised the role that the marae has in Maori social life. In fact a very small percentage of Maori people — outside of a few Maori areas like Ruatoki and perhaps parts of Ngati Porou — have any association with the marae at all. In my own area of Te Arawa (around Rotorua) I would say that for the vast majority of people of Maori descent that is very much the case.

**O'REGAN:** Except for the occasional hui or tangi perhaps?

**TAPSELL:** Very rarely — even for tangi. I believe we have grossly over-estimated the part the marae has to play in social functions. There are a variety of reasons for this and I believe we need to do much to improve the position of the marae amongst our people. One of the first of those is to attend to the basic, pragmatic question of money. Maraes are generally badly off financially. They are an enormous financial drain on Maori communities.



The struggle for improvement and maintenance and the not infrequent financial difficulties strangle the potential of the marae for our people.

I believe the taxation of our Maori incorporations and trusts should be dramatically reshaped to permit them to play a much more supportive role for our marae. In that way our lands could effectively underpin our culture. With the marae financially secure it could begin to play a much more central role in Maori life. It would provide the capacity to modernise them in certain important respects. We have magnificent Meeting Houses, some good wharekai but, generally, we have a long way to go in terms of ablutions — showers, toilets etc. Young people today care much more about such things. There are few things that make staying on a marae more acceptable and attractive to people — especially our younger ones than good showers and modern, effective sanitation. Younger Maori wanting to take their Pakeha friends to the marae should be able to do so with complete confidence in the water supply and the drains — in the standard of living that can be had there. Once these things are accomplished we can turn this financially secure treasure of ours, the marae, towards new functions and roles that our young people can relate to. For example I would like to see maraes with a room added to them in which there were TV and Video facilities and libraries of tapes on everything from Maori Health to whaikorero, waiata, whakapapa, educational topics, anything to do with Maori and the Maori situation — Why can't we have all of those? Why can't we have a Poly or an Apple computer there? — A modern relevant learning centre — that's what I'm talking about. The marae should be a place where all sorts of learning takes place, which is attractive and stimulating to be at. When the import-

ant things are taking place at tangis or hui we could close it down; but there's a lot of hours on the marae when there is nothing for the young; that's when we could give them a computer to play with — any activity that fosters mental agility and which they see as relevant to them.

Finally, and I think this is important, the marae should once again become something of a recreational sports centre as it was for the previous generation to us. I am pleased that many in my area are revamping and upgrading their old tennis courts and squash courts and building gymnastic facilities. All of these changes could go a long way to bringing our generations together around the marae centre, to satisfy a bigger range of needs and functions. This sort of marae could really begin to provide the social and cultural focus which is much talked about but which, in my view, we currently fall far short of.

The marae has to make a much more up to date contribution to the Maori social process.

**O'REGAN:** Let's come back to some of those social processes. The Johnson Report was widely attacked for its comments on health and sex education. Maori illegitimacy rates amongst the young are just one area of continuing tragedy for many of our people. How did you respond to that aspect of the Report?

**TAPSELL:** I have reservations about the Report. I can see why the Minister was reluctant to accept it per se. At the same time I think it was a great shame that so much of value was thrown out with the parts which were objected to. I personally think that every parent has the right to say whether his or her child will be taught about sex at school, more so about contraception! I wouldn't mind if I was confident that teachers were competent in these areas, but I have lit-