

"Many 'take's' find shelter under the umbrella of the Council"

Over the past two years, the New Zealand Maori Council has found itself increasingly called upon to speak out on behalf of the Maori people, be it about the use of Maori Wardens in gang or protest confrontations or else legislation in Parliament.

For a body legislated into existence in 1962, it's come under a lot of pressure from Maori and Pakeha people dissatisfied with Council involvement in these contentious issues.

While the issues achieve prominence in the media for a short time, little is written about the other work of the New Zealand Maori Council in the flax-roots community.

Tu Tangata takes this opportunity to background the Council with an article prepared by its present Secretary, Tata Parata.

In 1962 an Act of Parliament named the Maori Community Development Act was passed to provide for the constitution of Maori Associations and to define their powers and functions.

A "Maori Association" includes a Maori Committee, a Maori Executive Committee, a District Maori Council and the New Zealand Maori Council.

The Act outlines the general functions and powers and control of Maori Wardens and Honorary Community Officers. It also provides for elections, defines administration and general establishment of Maori Committee's in relation to District Maori Councils, and in turn their relationship to the New Zealand Maori Council.

Section 18 of the Act sets out the General functions of the New Zealand Maori Council.

1) The general functions of the New Zealand Maori Council, in respect of all Maori's shall be —

a) To consider and discuss such matters as appear relevant to the social and economic advancement of the Maori race;

b) To consider and, as far as possible, give effect to any measures that will conserve and promote harmonious and friendly relations between members of the Maori race and other members of the community.

c) To promote, encourage, and assist Maoris —

- i The placement of Maoris in industry and other forms of employment;
- ii The education, vocational guidance, and training of Maoris;
- iii The provision of housing and the improvement of the living conditions of Maoris;
- iv The promotion of health and sanitation amongst the Maori people;

v The fostering of respect for the law and law-observance amongst the Maori people;

vi The prevention of excessive drinking and other undesirable forms of conduct amongst the Maori people; and

vii The assistance of Maoris in the solution of difficulties or personal problems.

2) The New Zealand Maori Council shall advise and consult with District Maori Council, Maori Executive Committees, and Maori Committees on such matters as may be referred to it by any of those bodies or as may seem necessary or desirable for the social and economic advancement of the Maori race.

3) In the exercise of its functions the Council may make such representations to the Minister or other person or authority as seem to it advantageous to the Maori race.

Election of Maori Committee Officers is every three years in March, followed by District Maori Council in April, followed by New Zealand Maori Council elections in May when appropriate Delegates to the New Zealand Maori Council elect the New Zealand Maori Council Chairman and Deputy Chairman. The Act also provides for the financial affairs of Maori Associations, expenses, conduct of meetings, auditing of accounts etc.

The present New Zealand Maori Council has eleven District Maori Councils. Each District Maori Council sends three Delegates to a New Zealand Maori Council conference, held quarterly. The full New Zealand Maori Council numbers thirty three. Added to this are representatives of the Wardens and Maori Womens Welfare League who report at such conferences.

As can be imagined, Delegates to such conferences are of varying

occupations, schoolteachers, farmers, housewives, community workers, administrators, self-employed, doctors, accountants, professors, all devote voluntary time and energy on behalf of their committees and district councils and only travelling and accommodation costs to attend such conferences are paid.

Each Delegate brings to the conferences the feelings and desires of the community which he represents. Some are urban problems such as unemployment, housing, gangs etc. Some are rural such as farming, environmental, horticultural and dairy. The Delegates are the spokesmen for their districts. Some issues are national ones, some are domestic.

There is provision within the Act to allow the New Zealand Maori Council, through representations made at the conference, to approach Ministers or other persons of authority on matters of importance.

At the community level all Maoris on or over 20 years of age living in a Maori committee area are eligible to vote, and any person, whether a Maori or not is eligible for election. Each Maori committee has defined boundaries.

The New Zealand Maori Council is only effective as the community it represents. It is the National Body organised by an act of Parliament to act as a sounding board for Maori needs and aspirations. It performs an important role for all Maoris whether urban or rural no matter what political affiliation or religious beliefs — but it can only maintain this role if the support is based on the community.

As at present, the District Chairmen of each District Maori Council are as follows:

Taitokerau — (North Auckland): Sir Graham Latimer

Auckland: Dr Rangi Walker

Waikato/Maniapoto: Dr Tom Winitana

Tauranga/Moana: Mr Bill Ohia

Waiariki — (Rotorua): Mr Manu Paul

Aotea — (Taranaki): Mr Rei Bailey

Tairāwhiti — (East Coast): Sir Henry Ngata

Takitimu — (Hawkes Bay, Wairarapa): Mr John Tangiora

Raukawa — (Horowhenua): Mr Arthur Price

Wellington: Mr Alma Mihaere

Te Waipounamu — (South Island): Mr Joe Karetai

The Council is also involved in publishing. The Tu Tangata magazine published as at present 2 monthly, is distributed jointly by Maori Affairs Depart-