

## Our Country: Our Choice. Morrie Love

Our Country: Our Choice Aotearoa/New Zealand by the year 2020: Maori and European Perspectives Morris Te Whiti Love\*The last quarter of the 20th Century has been one of connection for both Maori and non- Maori New Zealanders. One and a half centuries after the start of rapid colonisation is long enough for those who were involved to be forgotten in a personal sense. It is also long enough for people wanting to remember those people to do so as an act of historical remembrance, rather than personal recollection. The sesqui-centennial of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi was intended to celebrate our coming of age as a bicultural nation. The realities have been quite different from the romance of one side and the pretence of the other. We seem to be going through adolescence as a nation, all hormones and drama. I have lived through a very changeable era. My wider family has known the effects of colonisation being the tangata whenua in Wellington at the arrival of the settlers from the New Zealand Company. They had at the time of the arrival of the settlers only recently arrived in this area from Taranaki themselves. They had barely established themselves before the Pakeha arrived en masse. They had nonetheless established their authority in the Wellington area. That authority remains to this day and will continue to the future generations. This was a period of rapid change for our people, who adapted from subsistence farming and fishing to being traders and growers of crops and animals. There were rapid changes in traditional occupations, but not so much in tribal custom and practice. Maori language and custom remained dominant until the turn of the century, when it became clear a change was needed for survival in the new world. My father was typical of our people of the time. He was born just after the turn of the century on Arapawa Island in the Marlborough Sounds. He was fostered by a Maori woman relative, who was traditional in every way. Maori was his first language and culture. He was brought to Petone to go to Petone West School as a young lad - he knew little English but had brothers and cousins who had been brought up in town. He did not prosper and left while still a youth. Dad brought us up knowing we were Maori but following the lead of my mother, that we needed a European education first. Te reo Maori and tikanga (practices) were not specifically taught although they were a feature of my childhood. The marae was an integral part of our family activity, although not on a daily basis. I gained a strong appreciation of the natural world from my parents. A love of both the sea and the bush were a natural part of growing up. Water has been a feature of my life as I learned survival skills in the water and in the bush. Growing things, agriculture and animals, were all important and I guess helped shape my future career path and interest. I was brought up in the worlds of Maori and non-Maori politics. These things shape my vision of the future but do not serve to determine it exclusively. The world of my childhood like that of my parents must stay in that time. It cannot or should not be recreated. What should happen though especially for my mokopuna is the creation today of a future we can agree we would like both personally and collectively. Recent history surrounding the relationship between Maori and non-Maori has featured some distinctive periods not unlike the cycles of popular music or the various fashions for wearing clothes and how we wear our hair. I would characterise the period since the Second World War like this. Just after the war many Maori men came back to a changed and changing world. They were not assisted like their non-Maori counterparts, and were left to their own devices and the care of their own whanau. The land base had diminished and was continuing to disappear. Locating in the countryside and working in the rural environment rapidly became a non-option. Having been overseas, and with the postwar growth of manual jobs in the cities, the migration from the country began in earnest. Once begun, it progressed apace and the boom times of the Korean War fuelled the growth of industry. Many Maori had already stopped being farmers, and land areas were consolidated into incorporation blocks to be farmed on behalf of beneficial owners or Maori shareholders. Returns to the marae and the whanau left behind decreased and tended to be only to tangi, weddings, and birthdays. A period of prosperity followed through the fifties and sixties. Many Maori did not fully share the prosperity and did not purchase homes of their own. Instead they ended up living in state houses built by the Maori Affairs Department. They also did not often gain skills or qualifications, but tended to be labourers. Many had considerable academic ability but did not like staying at school. Coming to the city was to make money rather than to gain skills. Few Maori were involved in investment, and many disinvested in hard times by selling land interests. As we moved into the seventies and eighties there was a recognition that Maori education was seriously deficient, and attempts were made to get Maori into the mainstream of education. It was not really successful. There was also a recognition that the Maori language was declining rapidly. It became clear that things were not all well for Maori. The period of protest began.

Demand for change Prior to this time the degree of separation of Maori and non-Maori and the lack of a coherent and voluble Maori voice had created the illusion that all was well with Maori and between the races. In this period that rapidly changed, with liberal Pakeha pushing to change how we recognised things that were important for Maori. The birth of the Waitangi Tribunal and the growth of land rights awareness, along with the re-emergence of the Treaty, aided by a cultural renaissance, fuelled the growth of the new identity. The new educated middle class Maori emerged as a culturally hungry, politically aware force. At first the politicians, driven by the Courts, were keen to assist change and to support the rise of recognition of Maori environmentalism. There was a discovery that Maori saw the world somewhat differently from non-Maori. The emphasis switched to differences rather than similarities. This new identity was unsettling for non-Maori, as in the past they had seen Maori as content to assimilate and be like them. That previous perception was comfortable and easy. No effort was required to understand that position or to accept that the person next door, despite being a slightly different colour from them, was in all other ways the same. There were some changes, but they were minor and people could live with them easily enough. The next period became the time of politicisation, where Maori were not content to leave real change to chance and pushed change to happen in every forum available. What Maori started to seek through the eighties and into the nineties was real political and economic power. The changes in this era started to bite. The backlash was equally robust. The reaction came not only from the conservatives who wanted to keep New Zealand white and monocultural, but also from the liberals, who had initially fostered the changes only to find they too

were outside the new political movements. For example, the Maori cause had been of great benefit to the conservation movement until it started to take a life of its own. This became very uncomfortable for the liberal non-Maori and provided for the parting of the ways. The Maori call for sovereignty, like the initial branding of the Treaty as a fraud, has a number of inherent difficulties. The first of these is that what is meant by sovereignty varies from person to person over a very wide scale. Some is driven from a racist base, seeing non-Maori as the essential problem and thus wanting to create a nation-state (or number of nation-states) within the overall sovereignty of the country but competing with it. This would create a number of semi-autonomous reserve-type states with internal 'home rule.' No one I am aware of has ever fully articulated this model but it just seems to hover in the background like some ghostly portent. At the other end of this scale the sovereignty argument follows a more Treaty-based approach which seeks greater authority and control (rangatiratanga) over resources which may presently be used and valued by non-Maori. This has been the basis of many claims to the Waitangi Tribunal and direct negotiations with Government. In between these two broad models a number of constitutional models are espoused. One such model is the tri-cameral legislature in which there are two lower houses which can process the business of Parliament, both subject to a single upper house. One lower house is for non-Maori and the other for Maori, with the upper house shared equally. There are many more possibilities in this regard, but few have substantial non-Maori support and so are not likely to drive change in this area. The most likely course is along the model of tribal authority, not unlike local government. The tribal authority could have a more horizontal relationship with the Crown's representative, particularly if we were to move to republic with a senate or perhaps a president. These are merely matters of conjecture that would need considerable careful scrutiny and debate. As economic sovereignty disappears it would seem wise for Maori to gain economic strength. This will be the currency whereby any real gains for Maori will be able to be made here or anywhere else. Maori have fought to regain a dying culture, they have fought to maintain a dying language, they have been described as a dying race. There will be no tangi or funeral here however, and though a degree of assimilation is occurring it is now in two directions. Non-Maori parents are discovering their children are much more bicultural and in fact multicultural than themselves. The new world of the next century will resemble this one but will be more evolved, especially in a cultural sense. Rather than wasting energy resisting, the time has come to recognise we have something unique and special that belongs to us, our children and their children. It is not Maori and is not European, it is not American, Asian or Australian. It is us. I hope we can see ourselves in the mirror and take pride.

\* Morris Te Whiti Love Morris Te Whiti Love is affiliated to Ngati Te Whiti, Ngati Tawhirikura and Ngati Puketapu hapu of Te Atiawa as well as to Taranaki tuturu. He is a descendant of Te Whiti o Rongomai and the Nga Motu chiefs who established their manawhenua in Te Whanganui a Tara (Wellington) and of Honiana Te Puni and Wi Tako Ngatata along with their relation Te Wharepouru. Morris is also a descendant of John Agar Love from the Isle of Skye who married Mere Ruru Te Hikanui from Taranaki. The Love family have maintained their interests in both Wellington and the Marlborough Sounds along with their interests in Taranaki. Arapawa Island is particularly important as it was here that both Morrie's father Wera Te Teira and uncle, Makere Rangiatea (Sir Ralph) Love, were born. Morrie's mother is of European extraction and was born in Waitotara. She is an internationally known expert in the iris species. Morris is married with four children and has two mokopuna. Morris has a degree in agricultural engineering, worked with Catchment Boards dealing with engineering schemes and water resources and spent time teaching civil engineering in Papua New Guinea. He formed the Natural Resources Unit in the Ministry of Maori Affairs and managed Maruwhenua, the Maori secretariat of the Ministry for the Environment. In between these jobs, Morris worked as a private consultant in Maori resource management and Treaty claims to natural resources. In June 1996 Morris took up a new position as Director of the Waitangi Tribunal.