

Chapter Three

Our Language is Our Culture

Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori

ONE OF THE MOST LONG-STANDING MOTIFS OF MĀORI ACTIVISM is the loss of culture is epitomised by the language, te reo. During the first part of the twentieth century Apirana Ngata had been a staunch advocate of ensuring all aspects of Māori culture survived modernisation, including tribal (political) organisation. He promoted the active use of te reo at home and in the community, while also seeing an important place for English-language education. From the 1950s the Māori Women's Welfare League had begun questioning government policy on the teaching of te reo and Māori history in schools, and later some of its members had limited success promoting the idea of Māori playcentres. But these early advocates had to pitch themselves against schools that actively prohibited the reo in their grounds. And 1960 it was clear that policies of integration meant that Māori would be influenced to make English their first language. In the words of Hunn, te reo was a relic of an ancient life that would be difficult to keep alive. In addition, as the Waitangi Tribunal would later hear, schools, the media, government departments and the courts were monocultural and monolingual. Even if they would deign to welcome the Māori language, they were ill-equipped to receive it. Opportunities to hear and speak Māori publicly were severely restricted, and government indifference meant the public and officialdom held it in low esteem.

Concern for the ailing state of Māori language and culture was picked up again in earnest in 1970, when the Māori council convened a Young Māori Leaders' Conference at the University of Auckland. The conference, an annual fixture on the Māori calendar, brought together kuia and kaumātua, members of the Māori council and the welfare league, Māori incorporations, trust boards, unions, students, gang members and church leaders.⁸ The 1970 conference produced a report for submission to the Government. Amongst its many concerns were the preservation of te reo me ōna tikanga, and fostering understanding and respect for Māori and Māori culture among Pākehā. Conference participants voiced their anger and frustration



Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga

One of the most long-standing motifs of Māori activism is the loss of culture, epitomised by the language, te reo Māori.

Hoani Waititi, Māori language advocate and writer of *Te Rangatahi* texts for learning Māori, teaching in the 1950s.



Māori language petition being delivered to Parliament 1972 - Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga

Ngā Tamatoa initiated a nationwide petition calling for the inclusion of te reo in primary and secondary schools. The Māori Language Petition eventually gathered 30,000 signatures. .

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LEARN MAORI

AKONA TE REO MAORI



**NATIONAL
MAORI LANGUAGE
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over the plight of Māori lands, culture, language and people and asserted that more immediate and direct steps were needed. It was from this energy that Ngā Tamatoa arose. Conference deliberations helped to define their goals some of which included opposing racism, campaigning for Māori culture and language, seeking redress for the loss of Māori land, and ensuring Pākehā and the Crown properly observed the Treaty of Waitangi.

Some of Ngā Tamatoa's greatest achievements can be seen in the Māori language and education initiatives that exist today. Together with the Te Reo Māori Society, Ngā Tamatoa initiated a nationwide petition calling for the inclusion of te reo in primary and secondary schools. The Māori Language Petition eventually gathered 30,000 signatures. On 14 September 1972, which was announced as the inaugural Māori Language Day, it was hand-delivered to Parliament by a delegation of key supporters. As a direct result of this action the Government introduced the teaching of Māori in primary and secondary schools, although largely as an optional extra. Taking the advice of its petitioners, it also established a one-year training course for native speakers to address the shortfall in qualified staff. The Government subsequently got behind Māori Language Day, which was later expanded to Māori Language Week.

Overall, it was a great achievement, though it came at great cost. Hana Jackson was a leading figure in both Ngā Tamatoa and the Māori language campaign. She worked tirelessly, and did so in the face of Pākehā and Māori animosity. As the campaign progressed, alongside several others, Ngā Tamatoa developed a reputation for radicalism and aggression. Members experienced ridicule, personal harassment, and rejection. They were scorned by many Māori, who felt they were somehow bringing Māoridom into disrepute. They were criticised for adopting Pākehā protest methods, and chastised for being out of touch with their people and being unable to speak the language themselves. But they were mostly young and urban, and therefore belonged to the section of Māori society that felt most distanced from their culture. It now seems appropriate that those who felt most deprived of te reo should be the ones who sought support to ensure its survival.

Whatever people thought of Ngā Tamatoa and their tactics, they did succeed where others had previously failed. Furthermore, in the wake of the petition Māori continued to press for official support for the language, as well as developing their own initiatives. Continuing protests called for proper pronunciation in broadcast media, Māori programmes, more Māori people on TV and greater recognition of Māori as the language of the tangata whenua. In 1978 Ruātoki School became New Zealand's first bilingual school. This move was followed in quick succession by the establishment of the Te Atārangī movement – designed to restore te reo amongst



March demanding equal status for Māori language in Wellington 1980 - *Dominion Post* Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library

Māori adults – Te Whare Wānanga o Raukawa at Ōtaki in 1981, and the first kōhanga reo at Wainuiomata and Waiwhetu in 1982. The kōhanga reo movement, later joined by kura kaupapa Māori and other forms of Māori immersion education, has played a primary role in revitalising the reo. The notion of Māori-language schools has attracted its share of critics – those who view such moves as separatist and others who assume all-Māori education is unhelpful to children who will have to eventually rejoin a system dominated by the English language. For Māori, the results speak for themselves: language learning also ensures the continuance of cultural imperatives – values, beliefs, tikanga.

The welfare of the language has remained at the forefront of Māori issues. In 1986, the Waitangi Tribunal reported on a claim lodged by Huirangi Waikerepuru and Ngā Kaiwhakapūmau i te Reo that alleged the Crown had failed to protect the Māori language, and had implemented policies that actively contributed to its decline.⁹ The tribunal's *Te Reo Māori Report* did not go as far as the claimants had hoped, and the government response did not go as far as the tribunal had recommended. But the Māori Language Act 1987 made Māori an official language of New Zealand and allowed Māori to be spoken in any legal proceedings. The act also set up Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori to actively promote the reo and to guide government as it gave the newly official language practical effect. Progress in Māori education continued, as official recognition was granted to kura kaupapa Māori and wānanga. However, dissatisfaction with broadcasting policies continued, especially when Government began to restructure the broadcasting sector in the late 1980s. The Māori view was often criticised on the grounds that Māori were claiming radio frequencies which did not exist in 1840. The argument was somewhat misguided. It was clear that radio and television could have a mammoth impact on Māori-language development, taking Māori music, language, news and events into homes, schools and workplaces all over the country. Broadcast seemed one of the most potent avenues through which the Government could protect and enhance te reo. Eventually the Government did reserve broadcast frequencies for use by Māori, and in 1993 it established Te Māngai Pāho, a funding agency for the promotion of Māori language and culture.

Advances have been made since the 1972 petition broke the first ground, and they have come with more than their fair share of obstacles and controversies. A small number of Māori and Māori-language programmes are now broadcast on mainstream TV, including the staples *Te Karere* and *Marae*, and a selection of children and youth shows. The Māori Television Service is free-to-air in some parts of the country. It began broadcasting eight years after the Aotearoa Television Network closed after running a short-term trial in Auckland. Most, if not all, areas have at least one iwi or Māori radio station to tune into. Some concerns remain about the quality of the reo spoken, the level and extent of fluency, and its long-term future. Although healthier than it was thirty or forty years ago, and no longer facing its own demise, te reo Māori is still in a delicate condition, kept alive by a genuine passion for learning, and a confidence it seems to evoke in its students.



Classes at Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Hoani Waititi, Auckland - Gil Hanly

The Te Kōhanga Reo movement, kura kaupapa Māori and other forms of Māori immersion education, have played a primary role in revitalising te reo Māori. One of the first kura kaupapa Māori was opened at Hoani Waititi marae in 1985.



Launch of Māori television, Auckland 2004 - Māori Television Service



Launch of Māori television, Auckland 2004 - Māori Television Service

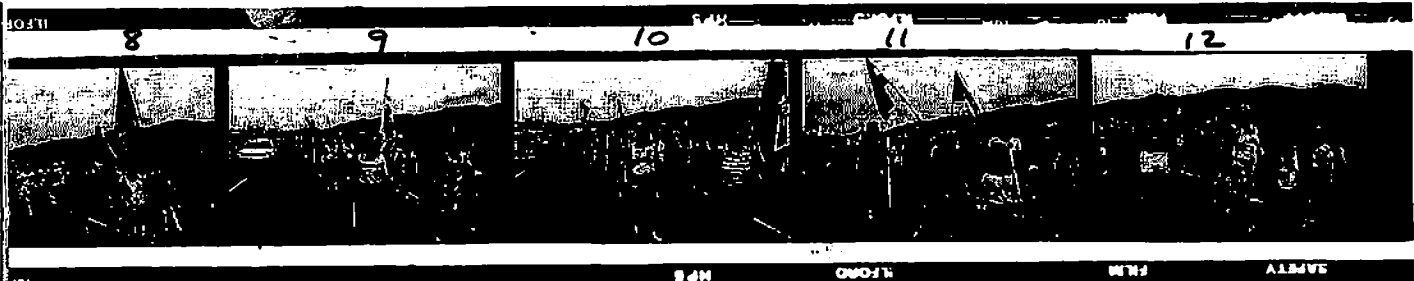
Broadcasting is one of the most potent avenues through which the government could support te reo Māori. Radio and television provides a mammoth opportunity to impact on Māori language by taking Māori music, language and news into homes, schools and workplaces all over the country.

Launch of Māori television, Auckland 2004 -Māori Television Service



Chapter Seven

Maranga Mai



FROM THE LATE 1970S AND INTO THE 1980S A PROLIFERATION of protest organisations joined the land rights movement in populating the Māori political landscape. New groups merged and networked with old, mobilising around Waitangi Day actions, anti-apartheid and anti-racism movements, and a profusion of event-specific protests. The Waitangi Action Committee (WAC), He Taua, the Māori People's Liberation Movement of Aotearoa, the Māori Women's Movement, and Hui Tāne kept themselves – not to mention the police, the press and public opinion – politically busy. Waitangi Day protests begun by Ngā Tamatoa became a permanent fixture on the protest calendar, culminating in the 1984 Hīkoi ki Waitangi. Also in 1984 two provocative additions to the nation's literary culture were published. Donna Awatere, already identified by Robert Muldoon as a subversive, published *Maori Sovereignty*, a book notorious for condemning 'white hatred' for its role in the ills that plagued Māori society and advocating Māori sovereignty. And Dun Mihaka challenged both the law and the Crown with his book *Whakapohane*. In the meantime, Matiu Rata resigned, first from the Labour Party and then from Parliament. Disillusioned, he was no longer willing to tolerate the blinkered one-people idealism of government policy, pointing to the continued social and economic deprivation of Māori and official apathy toward Māori aspirations. Rata's resignation forced a by-election in June 1980, and his ensuing campaign attracted considerable activist support. Although he did not win he did establish his new Mana Motuhake party as a political strength that seriously threatened the Labour Party's long history of monopolising the Māori vote.

Māori activism brought the Treaty of Waitangi to the centre of a public conversation which was now pushed to broaden its analysis and consider the treaty's past



MAORI SOVEREIGNTY

DONNA AWATERE

The late 1970s and 1980s saw a proliferation of protest organisations. New groups merged and networked with old, mobilizing around Waitangi Day actions, anti-apartheid and anti-racism movements, and a profusion of event-specific protests.



Waitangi Day protest, Wellington 1986 - Gil Hanly



Waitangi Day protest, Wellington 1986 - Gil Hanly



Waitangi Day protest, Wellington 1986 - Gil Hanly

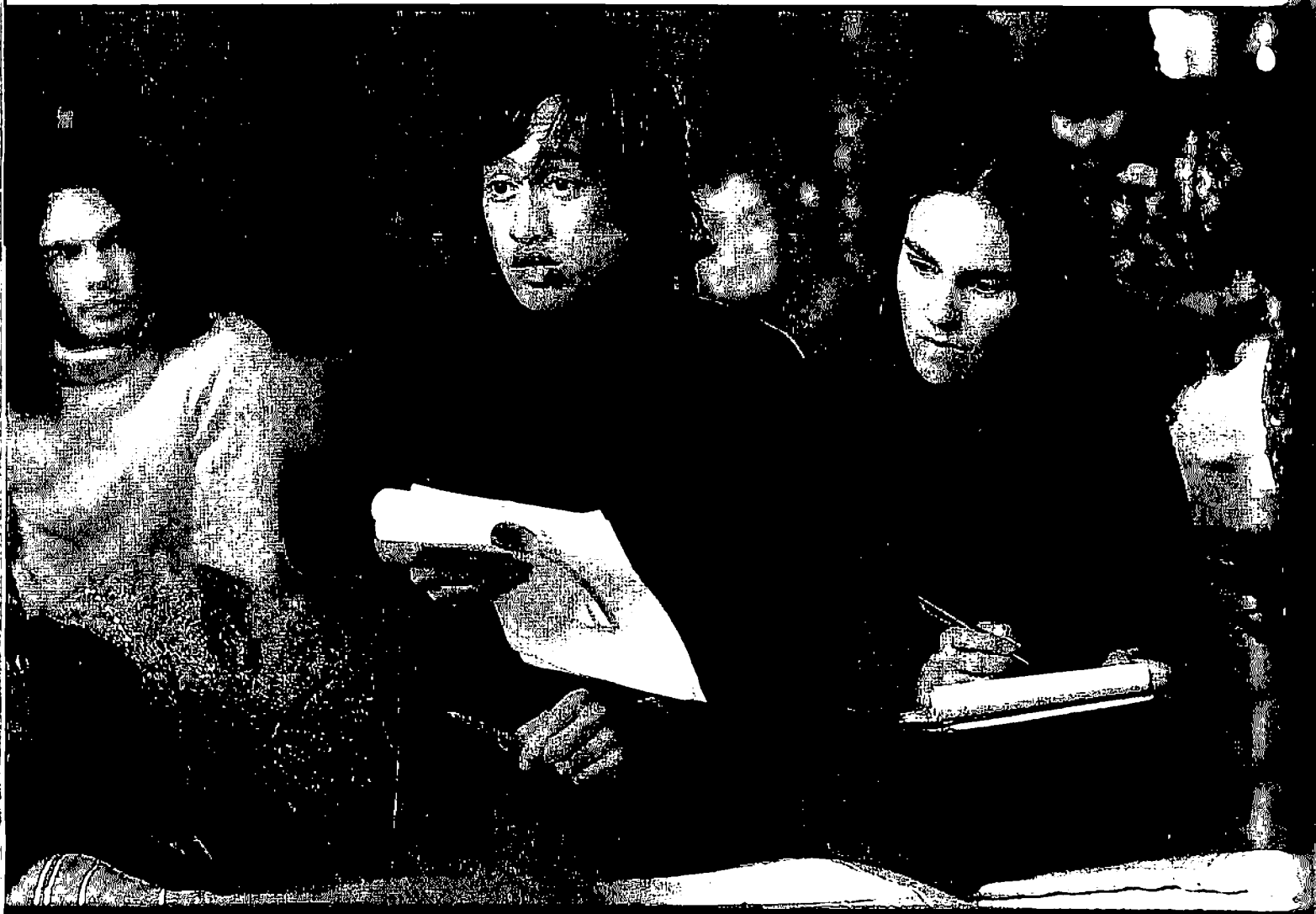
Some challenges became important to Pākehā, particularly those surrounding debate about identity which had emanated from debates about the treaty. Pākehā were challenged to learn about themselves – their own culture, identity, and history.

as well as its practical standing and effect in modern society. Māori autonomy, self-determination, sovereignty, independence and mana motuhake all added to the vernacular of tino rangatiranga. Calls were made to face the historically fraudulent handling of the treaty, and to ratify and honour it. Māori women drew attention to their distinct position in society, and the double-dose of discrimination they faced when sexism and racism joined forces. Māori artists, writers and musicians released the spirit and drive of the evolving debate into their works. New bottom lines were constantly being laid down.

Māori activists were often portrayed as an obnoxious minority haranguing the country with unrealistic and unfounded demands. But some challenges became important to Pākehā. In an acknowledgement that understanding ourselves is an access to understanding each other, Pākehā were challenged to learn about themselves – their own culture, identity, and history. Māori activists and their supporters also challenged themselves. Māori identity was debated and expressions of it explored, encouraging participation in the Māori cultural renaissance that was underway. Māori activism also identified a breach in the opportunities to learn Māori politics and history and offered a curriculum distributed through newsletters, leaflets, badges, T-shirts, education kits, workshops, hui, music, art and poetry, all produced in alignment with the protesting voice.

While modern activism maintained its use of cutting-edge direct action, interactions with the State developed on other fronts, and the Government's Māori policy gradually began to respond to new influences.¹⁷ Kara Puketapu became the Secretary of Māori Affairs in 1977, a post he held till 1983. It was only the second time a Māori had held the position, yet the department's antecedents could be traced back to 1840. Kara was aware of the undercurrent of discontent that young Māori activists represented, and also understood the socioeconomic situation of Māori. Amongst his aims

In July 1973 the first conference of writers and artists was held at Te Kaha. Two hundred carvers, writers, painters, musicians, actors, singers, sculptors, photographers, film-makers, poets and dancers gathered.



John Miller



John Miller



John Miller



Opening of Tū Tangata strategy conference at Parliament 1980 - *Dominion Post Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library*

was a shift to a new philosophy of Māori development under the banner *Tū Tangata* which would recognise the strength of Māori people and harness their energies with the resources of the department. The shift continued under the fourth Labour government when the 1984 Hui Taumata, a Māori economic summit, launched a decade of Māori development. Tribal organisations would be strengthened, selected government programmes devolved to them, and new iwi-based social and economic initiatives encouraged.

These policy developments are usually coupled with changes to the Waitangi Tribunal's legislation to explain a simultaneous downturn in protest activity. But the results of the changes occurring within the bureaucracy were not immediately apparent, and may only offer a partial explanation. Other possible explanations included a trend amongst some urban Māori to return to their mainly rural and provincial tribal heartlands. People had families, partook of some of the incoming developments like *kōhanga reo*, and involved themselves in their iwi treaty claims and other resolutions of grievance. After all, Māori activism is synonymous with multi-tasking adaptability, and public attention is not a measure of its being, no matter how much the headlines love Māori protest. Amongst the many headline-makers, though, were a confrontation between the engineering students of the University of Auckland and He Taua in 1979, and the 1980 tour of the theatrical group Maranga Mai.¹⁸



Opening of Tū Tangata strategy conference at Parliament 1980 - *Dominion Post* Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library

**Kara Puketapu, as Secretary of Māori Affairs in 1977,
developed a shift to a new philosophy of Māori
development under the banner *Tū Tangata*.**

The account of the violent confrontation that took place between He Taua and the engineering students adhered to a pattern all too familiar to the protest movement. The head-to-head conflict that defined the incident only came after years of pursuing official channels with no tangible result. Also, more moderate responses and strategies came in on the tide of public condemnation that typically hounded the protestors in the aftermath. The university – despite its dedication to academic pursuits and the training of future leaders – had become home to an insulting and culturally abusive mock haka. By the 1970s the mock haka had become something of a tradition with engineering students who performed it with great drunken relish as a part of their annual capping celebrations. Even if Māori forgave the engineers' for their penchant for cultural appropriation, the haka was still highly offensive. The students dressed in grass skirts and painted obscenities on their bodies, including male genitalia and insults to women. The all-Pākehā all-male 'haka party' would then perform a haka that referred to Māori as a source of 'the pox' and repeatedly used the popular racist slur,



Race Relations Conciliators at Auckland University wait to address students 1979 - Gil Hanly

'Hori'. Māori and Pacific Island students, including an undergraduate Pat Hohepa, had begun using the university's official channels to voice their disapproval from the end of the 1950s. In 1971, a letter from Ngā Tamatoa's Syd Jackson asked the Auckland University Students' Association to renounce the haka. While the representative student bodies did distance themselves from it, the haka continued. In the lead-up to their grave error of judgement, the engineering students chose to ignore a mounting record of complaint, including a disapproving letter from the usually conservative Māori Club urging the engineering students to meet and discuss the matter before performing the haka again.

The students were undeterred. On 1 May 1979, as they prepared for their annual day of revelry and emboldened by the mandatory keg of beer, they were interrupted by a group of twenty-one Māori and Pacific Island men and women demanding they remove their grass skirts. A scuffle broke out in which thirteen students claimed they were assaulted. The entire episode lasted less than five minutes. The protestors left once they were satisfied they had achieved their goal of removing the skirts. In a press release later that day, using the name He Taua, they took responsibility for the

incident. Within hours eleven members of He Taua were at Auckland Central Police Station charged with rioting, and on the receiving end of police wrath. Charges of injuring with intent were later laid, although He Taua maintained their only goal was to get the students to remove the skirts.

In the weeks that followed misinformation and sensationalism overshadowed attempts to contextualise the event in terms of a general and ongoing failure in society to face and resolve long-standing Māori grievances. He Taua was branded an over-sensitive, rampaging gang, unable to take the light-hearted prank of students who were the innocent victims of an unprovoked attack. Pressure was put on Māori leaders to condemn He Taua. It took a month for the press to admit the existence of Māori support, which was widespread but usually came with the proviso that violence should not be condoned. Respected, expert and moderate older leaders maintained a presence in the subsequent five-day trial. Alongside the younger activists, they were able to present a broader perspective of what occurred and why, and an explanation of the cultural violation that the students' haka represented. But the deliberations of the courtroom could not undo the dangerous first impressions created by the headlines and public persecution that dogged He Taua.

Though Judge Blackwood ruled out cultural insult as a defence, he was aware of the political implications of the case. Of the total eighty-eight charges laid, most were dismissed. Seven of the eleven charged were convicted of participating in a riot and five of injury with intent. The defendants were sentenced to periodic detention, although imprisonment for up to fourteen years was a real possibility. In his judgement, Blackwood said that the engineering students' actions were unjustifiable in a multicultural society, but did not warrant the 'lynch law' that He Taua chose to practise.

Sensing a racial divide was forming, the Human Rights Commission called for submissions on racial harmony. In 1980 the results of more than 400 submissions were published. The commission's analysis of the submissions was published in a second report, *Race Against Time*. For a while, *Race Against Time* influenced government policy on race relations as it tried to find a path towards multiculturalism, which many people said could only be found by first achieving biculturalism. But even as the commission stepped in to treat the race-relations headache that He Taua had diagnosed, Maranga Mai was already on the road to notoriety with their own brand of politically astute music and drama.

Maranga Mai was a performance group from the Hokianga. Their play of the same name was an adaptation of a script previously performed by members of He Taua. The troupe had been involved in a number of the protests of the 1970s, and if they lacked formal training and experience it was more than made up for by their passion and commitment. The play dramatised the events of the 1970s, proclaiming the period

the dawning of the age of Māori awareness. An example of the politicisation of Māori arts, Maranga Mai made clever and artistic use of music and protest lyrics as a vehicle for getting through a performance which many audiences found harrowing. Some parts emphasised discrimination in the justice system and the stand-over tactics of police, language that could offend was frequently used, and a Pākehā policeman was shot in the closing scenes. After two weeks' practice and an impromptu performance at a family gathering Maranga Mai hit the road, with no money, inadequate transport and no formal itinerary. Their first public performance at the Maidment Theatre in Auckland enabled them to obtain a reasonable vehicle, and they continued touring schools and Māori venues around the North Island. Reactions to the play were mixed. There was some support for the theatrical commentary on Māori land issues and injustices, but there were reservations about its delivery. Controversy set in after a performance to pupils at Mangere College in May 1980. A barrage of complaints from parents and teachers led to a bureaucratic investigation into the members of Maranga Mai, and the youth worker who had organised the performance, Brian Lepou, who had also been involved with He Taua, faced the prospect of dismissal. Maranga Mai were accused of inciting racial disharmony, and their performance described as crude, offensive and extremely militant, deserving of the contempt with which it was treated. More sympathetic critiques described the play as thoughtful and important social commentary, upsetting only for those who had yet to face the realities of New Zealand's racial situation.

In September, MP for Southern Māori Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan arranged a special performance of the play at Parliament. Relatively few attended, but the troupe gave the most dynamic performance they could, taking advantage of the small number of MPs in attendance and addressing them directly as part of the play. In an unscripted moment at the very end a beer bottle was thrown against a wall. It was a dramatic reference to the kind of frustration simmering under the surface of a society that responded with complacency to an indigenous voice that felt consistently maligned and misunderstood, if not ignored. A small number who were in the audience that day were moved by what they saw, but the press chose to highlight the shock value of what it called the 'urban guerrilla' play. The usual negative attention trailed the group. The press drew attention to an arts grant Maranga Mai received to assist with their costs, and an official complaint to the race relations conciliator, which was later dismissed, alleged the group incited racial disharmony. Proving the adage that no publicity is bad publicity, Maranga Mai played to packed houses till the end of its tour, as people came to see what the fuss was about. Racism, was the issue. He Taua and Maranga Mai made that clear. And for those that missed the message, 1981 was about to provide another learning opportunity.



Bay of Plenty Times

Frustrated at the length of time taken for government to address their claims to 40,000 hectares of Tauranga land confiscated in 1864, members of Ngāi Tamarāwaho occupied the Tauranga Town Hall in September 1987.



Matt Tarawa at Tauranga
1987 - *Bay of Plenty Times*



Bay of Plenty Times



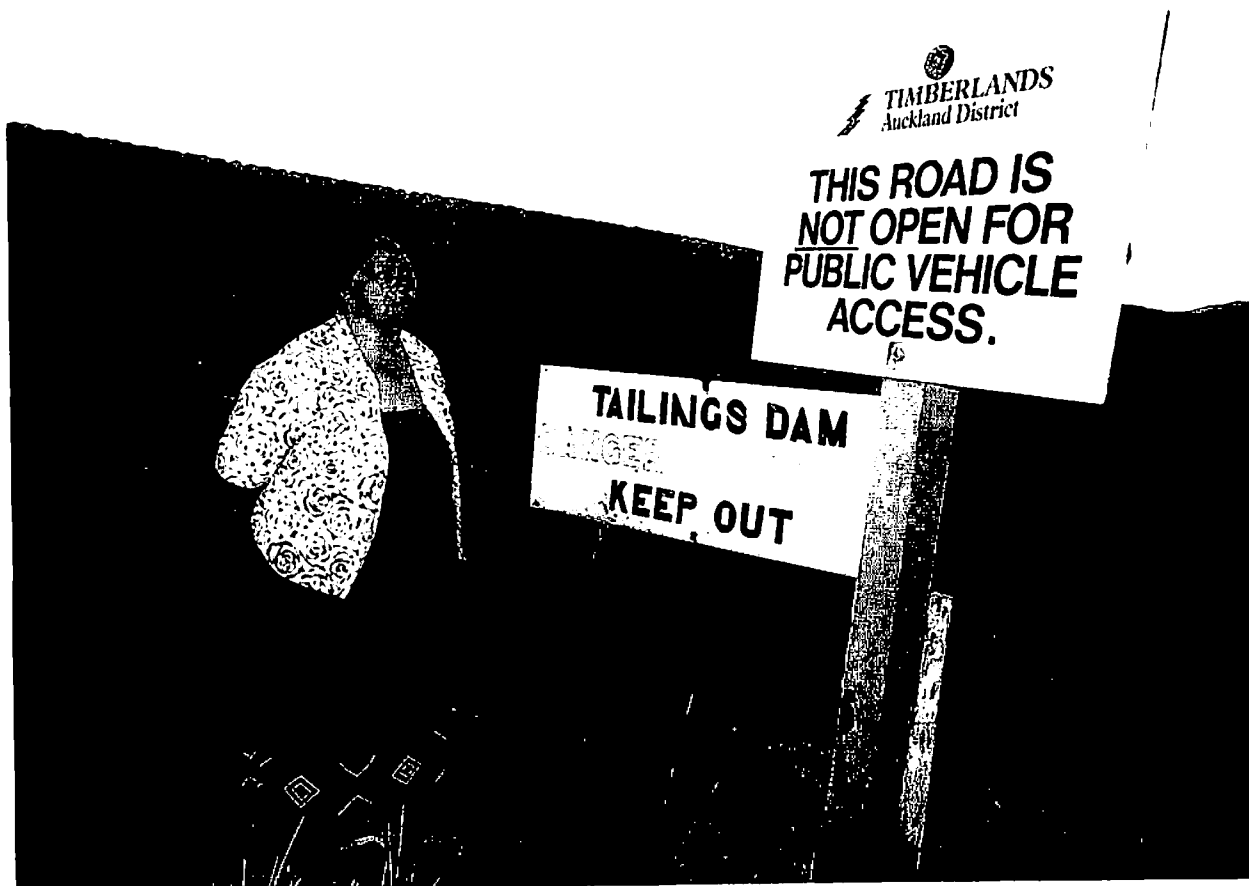
Gil Hanly



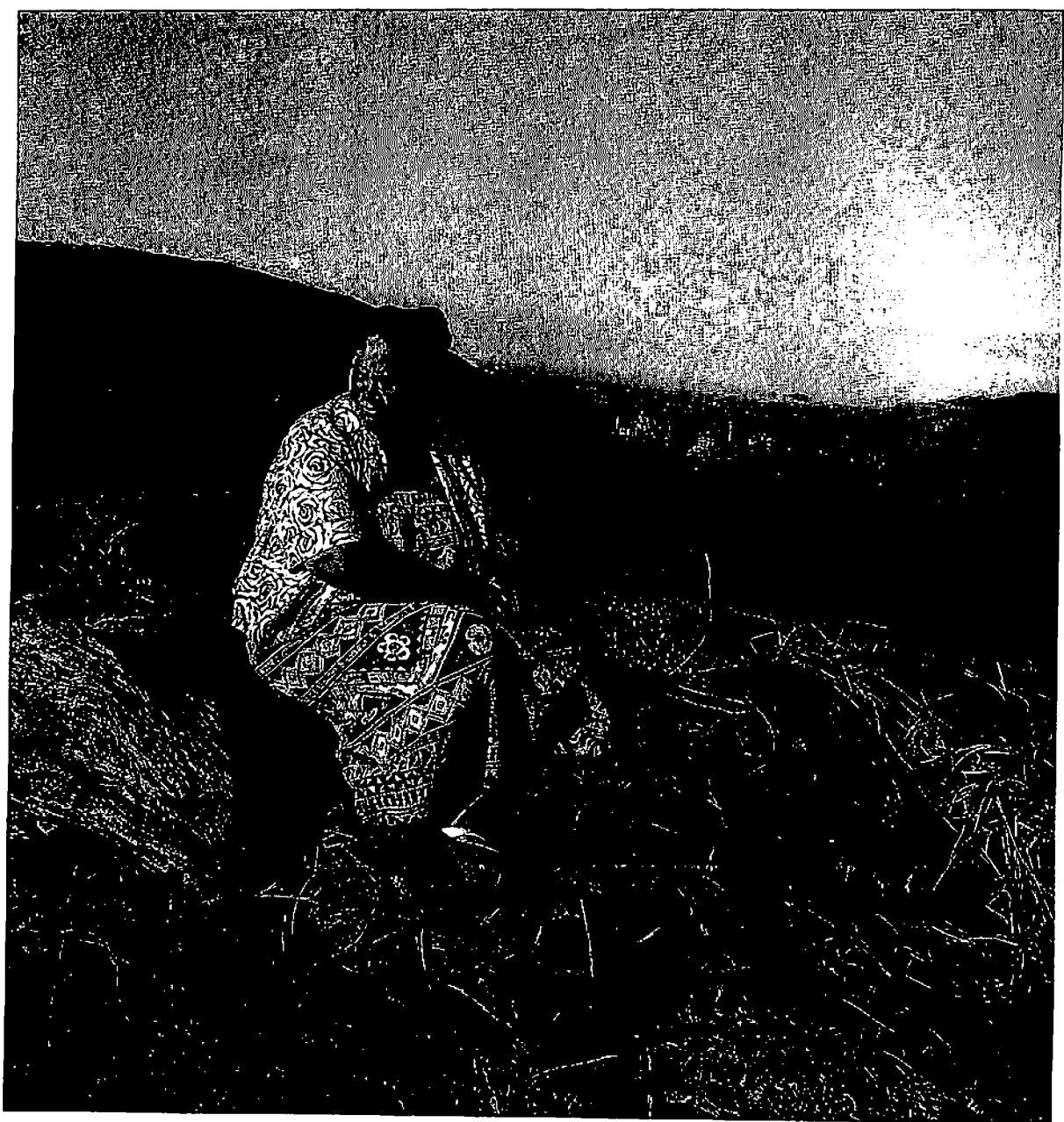
Protest camp at Maoro 1990 - Gil Hanly



Gil Hanly



Nganeko Minhinnick at Maoro 1990 - Gil Hanly



Gil Hanly

One of the Muldoon Government's economic development schemes, commonly known as 'Think Big', was the New Zealand Steel plant at Waiuku on the Manukau Harbour – lands of Ngāti Te Ata. Despite claims by Ngāti Te Ata there were extensive burial grounds on these lands, the mining company used huge excavators to mine the sands.