

**Parihaka Day**  
**Christchurch Cathedral**  
**5 November 2010**

**Sir Paul Reeves**

When we speak of the prisoners sent from Taranaki to Dunedin we tend to concentrate on the prisoners from Parihaka. But they were preceded by seventy four men of Pakakohe who were followers of Titokowaru, there was also a small East Coast group about whom we know little and then there were Te Whiti and Tohu who traveled around the South Island for a year and spent only a fortnight in Dunedin. But we honour them all: the discomforts they suffered, those who died and lie in a lonely pauper's grave, the families left behind in Taranaki and the tantalising memories that remain.

Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kaakahi are the great figures and rightly so. John Kenneth Galbraith says all great leaders have one characteristic in common. They are willing to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. Galbraith claims that this and not much else is the essence of leadership.

And so it was that when the final batch of prisoners returned to Parihaka they were greeted by Te Whiti in these words: *You were not imprisoned for heinous crime or theft but for upholding the words of Te Whiti. In such a case prison houses lose their disgrace and become houses of joy....You were imprisoned for the land, for the chieftainship and for godliness. A sea fish lying dead on the sand taints the atmosphere for miles around but the fact of your unjust imprisonment is now known far and near throughout the world.*

Some years ago I joined the hikoi from Taranaki that visited the South Island sites where the prisoners had stayed. Even by bus and ferry it was a tiring journey. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it could be hazardous to travel from Taranaki to Hokitika, Lyttelton, Ripapa Island or Addington on their way to Dunedin.. Nga iwi o Taranaki emphasise the danger. They tell the story of a ship that nearly overturned as it carried prisoners back to Taranaki. Maori, they say, were lowered into the sea, where they held onto ropes attached to the side and were told that if they let go they would be shot.

The time spent in Dunedin is well documented. A hulk called *The Success* transported them between work sites and the Dunedin jail. It ended its life as the Queen's Drive boating shed and now lies under Portobello Road. The men returned to Parihaka in batches. Some died in exile; three were buried in paupers' graves in Dunedin's Northern cemetery and their names are Watene Tupuhi (24) Piriranga (60) and Parirau Pitiroi (45). At least one prisoner Te Whao stayed in Dunedin. His descendents live there to this day.

These Taranaki men were prisoners of conscience who went into exile to assert that the land wrongfully confiscated belonged to them. They were young, handpicked by Te Whiti for this hazardous journey and they were unshakeable in the belief that they were morally right. In fact they stated that they had not been taken prisoners but surrendered as instructed. Hone Awhi put it this way *Te Whiti said we should be put in goal but that he would be in goal with us. We are in goal through him and we are not sorry for it. We are not fighting – we gave ourselves away. Nobody took us. I believe what Te Whiti said, I believe he is with us now, but cannot explain it.*

Go forward from the 1880's to 1917. Maori had enlisted for World War One but Waikato and Taranaki were distinctly apathetic about fighting for the Crown. Confiscation and the loss of tino rangatiratanga were too close and too painful. The New Zealand Government began a programme to conscript Maori and targeted the Western electorate covering the Taranaki and Waikato tribes. Eligible young men including the King's son were balloted. None of them appeared at the Army office and eventually they were rounded up and taken to Narrow Neck on Auckland's North Shore. To show her support Te Puea came and stood at the gate to the camp. The Defence Minister Sir James Allen traveled to Ngaruawahia to persuade the Waikato leaders to cooperate. Tupu Taingawahia disdainfully replied to Allen *ko wai to wha...who will suffer? My people cannot suffer more than they have done in the loss of their land and their mana.*

The issue touched my family personally. Alfred Sparks, my mother's brother, joined the Maori Pioneer Battalion and in the course of an eventful military career he was wounded, fined for losing equipment, promoted, treated for syphilis and awarded the Military Cross for setting a *splendid example to his section by his coolness under fire.* Our family has always understood that Alfred Sparks was not welcome back in Taranaki after the war.

Each year we commemorate Anzac Day and we concentrate on Gallipoli even though more New Zealanders were killed at the Battle of Passchendaele. Some suggest that the landing and the retreat from Gallipoli was the great nation building experience even though women and Maori are missing from the narrative. But there is something hegemonic here, one master principle is masking other views that ought to be heard. We should also be exploring the ambivalence, reluctance, uncertainty and opposition to war that is also part of our history and part of our nation building. We should recognise our tipuna for whom World War One was the colonisers' war not theirs. On Anzac Day we should consider our own civil war of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and gain a more nuanced and reflective understanding of what peace means.

Parihaka is not a convenient hook on which to hang our own particular agendas or understandings of war and peace. Parihaka has its own integrity and is continuing to unfold and reveal its own story. What we know we know in part. Knowledge of the past challenges dogmatic statements and sweeping generalisations. It helps us think

more clearly and formulate good questions. What does Parihaka teach us about nationhood? Who owns the past? Can we renegotiate our history? Without good questions you can't think coherently about who we are today

History warns against the assumption that there is only one way of looking at events. We must always be prepared to consider alternatives and raise objections. The most dangerous time for any nation may be that moment when things seem to be going unusually well. It's then that its leaders get carried away with a sense of entitlement. Judith Binney refers to the colonialist myth of empire – an assumed right of Europeans that they were in control and that Governments could determine matters of Maori custom better than Maori could.

Parihaka as a community has its tensions but it represents a principled stand based on spiritual values and a thirst for justice. In the 1860's Maori in Taranaki saw clearly that tino rangatiratanga and the land were the same thing. Lose one lose the other. The first shots were fired on 17 March 1860 near Waitara hence the whakatauki *Ko Waitara ko Waitara ko te raa teneii mate ai te whenua, i mate ai te tangata. Waitara, Waitara, the day the land and people were destroyed.* Out of that flowed shameful confiscation legislation such as the New Zealand Settlements Act 1863, the New Zealand Settlements Amendment Act 1864, the New Zealand Settlements and Continuance Act 1865, the New Zealand Loan Act 1863 and the Suppression of Rebellion Act 1863. Notice how often the word settlement occurs in that legislation. What happened to Parihaka was the culmination of 15 years of confiscation.

From his prison cell Bonhoeffer the German theologian wrote of a 'world come of age.' He tracked the shift in Western civilisation from divine commandments to humanly constructed rules for life. Sigmund Freud went even further. Religion and its ultimate symbol God was the unconscious wish of fragile human beings to create a world of meaning.

Parihaka and the trek of weary prisoners seems so anachronistic in such an environment. Their spiritual base is discounted or put aside. For those who stand in the Western tradition religion no longer dominates the social structures that shape our world. When tragedy strikes our leaders assure the victims of their thoughts not their prayers. We define the good life in terms of economics not in terms of the community of people who take part in life. Capitalism's problem is that it lacks the emotional bonds that can bind human beings together. Capitalism does not encourage you to love your neighbour. Gordon Gekko, back 20 years later in Oliver Stone's sequel to the film *Wall Street* still believes that greed is good. We must be able to do better than that.

But deep inside the Parihaka experience lies the seed of reconciliation and new beginnings. Someone has to say to Parihaka I accept responsibility because I have inherited the fruits of what was forcibly taken from you. In most settlements the

Crown apologises for wrongs done. My unease is that this gives the Crown the last word and that's always been the problem. We need to go the next step.

Reconciliation implies both apology and forgiveness. I have been involved in another settlement where the Crown apologised and we the injured claimants then forgave the Crown. The apology and forgiveness now form the basis of a whole of government relationship for which an MoU will be signed at the end of this month.

But in the meantime Parihaka is part of Taranaki iwi which has signed terms of negotiation with the Crown and committed itself to a process that could lead to a full and final settlement. That took place on 17 March of this year, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of civil war in Taranaki. Negotiation can be a difficult and dangerous experience.. Sometimes it's easier to live with a sense of grievance than move forward. Negotiation mean the group must be united and that can be hard.

In July I was asked to speak at the first of a series of preparatory hui and Te Miringa Hohaia also spoke of the history, significance, symbolism and traditions of the tribal rohe. He concentrated on whakapapa which inevitably leads to an eponymous ancestor all can relate to and which also binds them to the natural features of rocks, valleys, rivers, coastline and above all the mountain. Taranaki iwi want to be confident about themselves before they face the Crown.

The negotiators are Jamie Tuuta, Mahara Okeroa, Wayne Mulligan, Peter Charlton, Fay Mulligan and Toka Walden. The iwi has established three guiding principles for their engagement with the Crown:

the principle of utu. This means balance and respect and includes a spirit of generosity

the principle of future prosperity. This means the commitment of all parties to negotiating outcomes of greatest benefit to nga iwi o Taranaki.

The principle of good faith. This means honesty and sincerity of intention and a determination to foster a negotiating environment of initial trust and confidence.

Te Miringa Hohaia died recently and he will be missed for his knowledge, his commitment and enthusiasm for a successful negotiation with the Crown. Once when I went to Waitangi as the Governor General I was told there would be a protest but I would not be harmed. On the day and surrounded by about 50 members of my Taranaki whanau I found myself in the middle of noise, confusion and vigorous protest. My cousin Ted shouted to me that he would sooner be on the other side and I replied 'For God's sake Ted don't move.' Te Miringa was part of the protesting group but he took no part where I was involved. He went over to one side, put his taiaha on the ground and sat down.

Te Miringa played a pivotal part in the representation of Taranaki iwi and Parihaka in giving evidence to the Waitangi Tribunal. He could be a tough man and not every one appreciated him or what he said. But Te Miringa was integral to the revival of Parihaka waiata and poi. He advocated for Maori land rights and he advocated for the

arts.and the Peace Festival. He even encouraged a talented young Pakeha to make a film about Parihaka and sent him to me for advice.

At the end of all this will we be able to say that what is good for Maori is good for everyone? Can a new society rise from a divided past? That's a question for our nation today. Saint Antony who lived in the desert of Egypt said *Our life and our death are with our neighbour. If we win our brother we win God. If we cause our brother to stumble we have sinned against Christ.* Think about that