Rātana and Labour Party commemorate alliance

5:22pm, Friday 22 April 2016. By Harata Brown (news/reporters/harata-brown)

Members of the Rātana Church strolled through Parliament today to commemorate an alliance formed between the church and the Labour Party 80 years ago. Te Kāa looks back on the significance of this day for the two parties.

"It's the sign of remembrance 80 years ago. That's what brought us here today," says Ranea Aperohiama.

Apoto for the Hahi Rātana, Wairua Andre Mason says, “Aroha, Omeka, Pirihāriwha, the spirit within, and the words of the Rātana Prophet led us both today.”

Prophet Talapupokiti Wiremu Rātana forged the alliance between the Rātana Church and the Labour in 1938 when Labour leader Michael Joseph Savage was Prime Minister.

Today's Labour Party leader Andrew Little says that the relationship between both parties needed to be re-forged today.

"The lessons of today might be different, but the objective is still the same. Creating a country, creating community where everybody has a chance."

Te Tai Hauauru MP Andriam Rurawhe says, “This is a very special day for Rātana and for Labour, I think it's an opportunity to remember the past, and commemorate what happened, but also to look to the future too and how that might look for all of us.”

The alliance was seen as a means to advocate for Māori issues and the Treaty of Waitangi. Every year, politicians gather to Rātana Pā to commemorate the Prophet's birthday. But Mr Little says he wanted something more formal to recognise their relationship.

"So having a commemoration of this important event is a start, there will obviously be some kōrero between Labour's Māori MPs and Rātana over the next few months," says Little.

The Labour Party Leader says he hopes to be at Rātana Pā in October to discuss specific policies with Rātana leaders that are important to Māori and NZ.
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