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Quote

Bill English **6 FEBRUARY, 2017**

Waitangi Day: Breakfast Speech, Orakei Marae

Kia ora koutou katoa

What a wonderful, diverse group of people we have here, reflecting the fact that Tamaki Makaurau is one of the most diverse cities in the world.

It's great to be here with Ngati Whatua on Waitangi Day celebrating the achievement of so many iwi, and so many communities who have come to see that a treaty settlement, that an iwi that is part of their community, is a recipe for success for the future.

But, today is an opportunity to celebrate the achievement in particular of Ngati Whatua, moving from the turbulent times of the 1970's through to being one of our very successful iwi and now one of our larger, more successful commercial entities in the country.

What I want to do is look ahead to the path to 2040, the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty, only 23 years away. Because I think if we allow ourselves to celebrate what has been achieved, particularly in the last 10 or 15 years, then it will be easy to imagine a very successful, bicultural, diverse New Zealand by 2040.

Because what we've seen, particularly through the settlement process that is coming to an end, hard as that may be to imagine, is that it has launched so many iwi and Maori on the path of enterprise and aspiration and rebuilding.

But here are some more reasons why I think we can be so optimistic as we build on that achievement.

One, is the increasingly unique place of New Zealand in the world. Which I think has two important aspects.

One is consistent, ongoing economic success.

While we don't want to spend our whole time talking about GDP and money, the fact is this is a country that is delivering consistently economic opportunity, particularly to our young people, and consistently building the incomes of our families, moderately, but consistently and which almost uniquely has positive choices in the next 5 or 10 years. Because we have government surpluses and low debt.

We can choose to do things which many other countries simply can't choose. That's one part of it.

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The other, innately tied up with Waitangi Day, is the way that New Zealand has developed, in my view, a unique culture of dealing with difference and diversity and tension among groups.

There is almost nowhere in the world that can demonstrate the ability to find justice and see it done. Because there are so many places where the same kind of grievances, the same kind of history are trapping those countries in tension and conflict.

In New Zealand, we couldn't avoid it and we have dealt with it a remarkably successful way by any international measure. That ability is becoming, in my view, one of New Zealand's long term advantages and one of the reasons so many people now want to live here.

A second reason we can be optimistic is because of the record of leadership we've seen in bringing this country together in dealing with difficult issues that create tension but always finding solutions.

We saw this again just a couple of days ago at Waitangi.

Many people don't realise how much the business of government in New Zealand has changed over the last 10 years.

Driven by the presence of the Maori Party in the Beehive every single day, but more particularly the way that our leadership like Sir Tumu Te Heuheu, Ta Mark Solomon, bought together iwi to work constructively with government.

These aren't just hui where we all sit and listen and do nothing. This is a process where almost every month, every quarter we meet with the Iwi Chairs Forum.

At Waitangi with iwi leaders from around the country, often 200 at those meetings, these are the people that are driving the change in Maoridom, and we talk about real issues in a constructive and structured way where we are holding each other to account.

I can tell you having attended most of the meetings, we have spent a lot of time making sure that at the next one if we get asked a question we can answer it.

Because that's what iwi do.

And of course there are differences and tensions. Right now we are having an argument over one of the things that matters most, our tamariki and how we're changing what we are doing for our most vulnerable children, in a radical way, because we've done such a poor job in the past.

Of course you would expect that at the meeting we just had there were some hard words spoken. About what government needs to do and what government's expectations of whanau, hapu and iwi are because we are all in it together.

We haven't found yet, the answers to that issue, even in the legislation. But we have a relationship based on respect, not agreement. Based on mana and mana enhancing ways of behaving.

And the measure of it is that we keep coming up and iwi keep turning up. Because we've built confidence that any issue that can be dealt with, will be dealt with in a fair and progressive way.

And we have dealt with some hard issues. The foreshore and seabed, the whole issue of how we deal with our freshwater and whatever iwi rights apply there, and as I mentioned, our children.

So, what's impressive about it, as someone who has been in public life for a long time, is the discipline of the process.

It is by far the most disciplined and structured decision making process we use outside of cabinet.

But the continual renewal of leadership we see coming through iwi right across the country, these fantastic young people who are bicultural, bilingual, tough, generous and respectful has to be a recipe for success over the next 23 years through to our bicentenary.

So if we thought, if were worried that the leadership that has bought us this far was the end of it, it certainly is not.

What is has set free is a whole new generation of leadership that we can work with so constructively.

And a third reason that I think we can see some real success is the mutual benefit that is now much clearer between our wider population and the interests of iwi/maori and other ethnic communities.

And what I mean by that is that their success is everyone's now success. Because there was a time in New Zealand that settlements like Ngati Whatua were seen as a zero sum game.

If they won, we must have lost something. If they got something, it must have been taken from us and of course that's not how it's turned out. It's turned out that it helps everybody.

There are some obvious examples, one is the development of our regions, including Auckland, where it is becoming increasingly clear to those in the business communities that the long term, large committed investor in their region, almost without exception are iwi.

If you think of the stretch of the East Coast from the Wairarapa, up to Whanau a Apanui, treaty settlements there are $400 million – just in the last few years.

There is no one, on the east coast, of the North Island who is as committed as Ngati Kahungunu and its various hapu, to the long term interests of the Hawkes Bay, the Wairarapa, and up into the East Coast.

And now that people can see that, our Regional Development programme, led by Te Ururoa Flavell and Steven Joyce, is working in a way that no one thought it could, just in the last two or three years.

Another example is Whanau Ora, an approach I've supported from the day Dame Tariana Turia put it forward, because I've shared the view, despite criticism from media and opposition parties, that actually any whanau has some spark of hope which we can support, which can grow because that is who it is in the end that fixes the whanau.

It is not the department of social welfare. It's not the Ministry of Health.

Much as we have good intentions, the truth is we have not realised the promise to our tamariki yet of protection from violence, a safer community, a good education and a type of support that encourages aspiration and not dependency.

For many we have, but not for everybody and for the ones where we haven't met that promise, they are not just a cost of an otherwise good system, they represent a failure.

And in my time, 30 years of public policy, whanau ora represents the next, or the best, the truest, the most honest approach to dealing with those and supporting those who we haven't dealt with well.

It doesn't mean that change is going to happen easily, of course it won't. But the government has to get use to the idea that it isn't just in and out in a crisis. It is 20 years, 30 years.

As I said to the Iwi Chairs Forum the other day our Maori tamariki have an advantage because when government goes to change its ways it's got someone to talk to about it.

Someone who can see that flame and fan it, someone that has a collective reservoir of hope on which whanau can draw.

Some of our Pakeha whanau don't have that advantage.

So that's why Whanau Ora is a solution that can, in the long run, work.

So this is what we are celebrating today as a country. That we have understood our history and that we've shown, together, that we can change the path of it.

That we are not held back into conflict and grievance for things that we know should not have happened. But, we've had in New Zealand, a generosity of spirit which we see shared here today but demonstrated in this place in the memories that are so fresh around Bastion Point.

So, that's our New Zealand way.

Enterprise, fairness, tolerance and respect.

We have all got better at it because of the struggle over the treaty.

That is why I am so optimistic about the path to 2040 and why you can be so proud of what we celebrate today.

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Bill English Prime Minister

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