

(Bolger, J., 1998: 179)

BOLGER

A VIEW FROM THE TOP

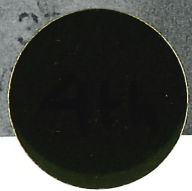


...ars as Prime Minister

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VIEW FROM

PNZ



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'I'LL NEVER BE A RACIST'

those who acted in the Crown's name. Doug Graham and I spent time discussing with officials how this requirement of Tainui could be met. In the end we came up with a suggestion that was acceptable to Tainui and to Buckingham Palace. When the Bill was passed through Parliament, it would include a full apology. Her Majesty, who was to visit New Zealand for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, would on my advice as her Prime Minister in New Zealand give the Royal Assent by signing the legislation herself instead of the Governor-General. That signing ceremony took place in Government House on 3 November 1995 and honour was preserved on all sides.

As the legislation was signed I recalled the overcast and drizzly day on 22 May 1995 when myself, Doug Graham, the Western Maori MP Koro Tainui Wetere and a very large number of others arrived at Turangawaewae Marae at Ngaruawahia to meet with the Tainui people. I was there to sign the settlement agreement with Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu, the Maori Queen. The emotion of the occasion was overwhelming, and never more so than when Doug Graham, in an inspired move, returned to the Tainui the historic sculptured bird Korotangi from the National Museum. Tainui believe Korotangi to be more than 1000 years old and to have been brought to New Zealand in the Tainui canoe at the time of the great migration. It was a special moment on a special day for New Zealand. We had a sense of joy knowing something good had been achieved.

The Ngai Tahu settlement was long, tortuous, and complex and took over six years to negotiate. More than once the negotiators lost patience with one another. There was enormous pressure on both sides to be constantly making concessions so as to make progress. At times this would get too much and angry words would be spoken and the negotiations would grind to a halt. I understood the pressures and when I deemed it right I would talk independently to the parties to remove the roadblocks so as to bring the parties back together quietly. Simon Murdoch, the Chief Executive of my Department, was a tower of strength at times like this. He clearly was scrupulously fair because at various times he annoyed both sides. He is an outstanding public servant. Ultimately, of