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## POLITICAL PARTIES

### MAORI POLITICAL PARTIES

Since the earliest days, Maori politics have been dominated by the necessity of making terms with the European world and way of life. Although traditional tribal differences and the land question have complicated issues, Maori politics have always hinged on the social and economic aspects of this central problem. In general the race has formed itself into two groups. The politically "advanced" section has solved the problems of integration satisfactorily and its political views – on all except the land question – coincide closely with those held by Europeans. On the other hand, the "conservative" section has clung to tribal beliefs and customs which emphasise the traditional differences between the two races. It is from this conservative element that the various Maori political movements have sprung – the sole exception being the Young Maori Party of Ngata. In most instances the founder has posed as a Messiah and has given his political ideas a confusing, pseudo-religious basis. This, of course, has made it more difficult for the conservatives to integrate.

#### Basic Ideas

There are three main ideas underlying Maori political movements and varying emphases provide each movement with its individuality. The first of these stresses Maori separateness, usually combined with a demand for self-government. This idea originated in the debate leading up to the founding of the "King" movement (*Kingitanga*) and matured during the period of isolation which followed the Maori Wars. In this connection *Maoritanga* ("the Maori meaning", or "all things Maori"), *Kotahitanga* ("to unify", or "keeping the race united"), and the *Ratana Morehu* ("the remnant") reflect successive interpretations of this. The question of the retention of tribal lands is another major factor in Maori political thinking. Many Maoris believe that Europeans have broken the Treaty of Waitangi by their constant pressure to alienate Maori lands. This feeling, which dates from Wiremu Kingi te Rangitaki's Maori Land League of the 1850s, was further embittered by wartime confiscations and the efforts of successive governments to buy up the remaining tribal lands. The third factor arises from the need for integration into the European way of life by acquiring new skills and adapting traditional living habits to a changed environment. This idea is comparatively recent as a political force and dates from the early 1890s.

The Maori Representation Act of 1867 was designed to meet the objection that Maoris had no say in framing legislation affecting their interests, particularly in respect to land. For a generation after 1867 Maori members of Parliament were drawn from among the chiefs who had supported the New Zealand Government during the wars or whose tribes had not been disaffected. In this period our Maori members usually divided equally upon European questions while they voted to support Maori matters from a tribal standpoint. During the 1890s, when a Maori political movement of some importance occurred, it seemed that the Maori members might soon form a third force in New Zealand.

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Zealand politics. This movement culminated in the formation of the Young Maori Party in 1909, but the members were soon absorbed into existing European political parties. In the early 1900s, when Mahuta Te Wherowhero and H. Kaihau joined the legislature, the disaffected tribes from the Maori Wars gained a forum for their views. A further development took place in the 1930s when T. W. Ratana won the four seats for members of his movement. Almost immediately the Ratana members joined the New Zealand Labour Party and ceased to exist as an independent group.

## Principal Political Movements

The following, taken chronologically, are the principal Maori political movements:

*Kotahitanga.* The Maori Parliament movement, which advocated complete self-government for the Maori race, flourished in the early 1890s when it was felt that Maori members of Parliament were unable to secure acceptance of their views by the European members. The Maori Councils Act of 1900, which created Maori local-government institutions in many areas, met their most urgent demands. This movement is not to be confused with T. W. Ratana's later Maori Welfare League, which had the same name. In the early 1900s the movement was largely absorbed by the Young Maori Party.

*The Young Maori Party* arose in the 1890s among the old students of Te Aute College, but was not formally constituted as a political party until 1909. Ngata was its secretary-organiser and Buck and Pomare were both members. They believed that Maori lands should be retained and developed by the Maoris themselves and that the Maori people should be encouraged to learn European skills and habits of living. They also demanded more forceful Maori representation in Parliament. After 1912, when Pomare joined the Reform Ministry, the group broke up, Ngata and Buck becoming identified with the Liberal Party.

*Muru Raupatu* was the name given to those who followed Sir Maui Pomare after he differed with Ngata on the land question. Its aim was to secure adequate compensation for land confiscated after the Maori Wars. In the 1920s Pomare obtained an award of £5,000 per annum to the Taranaki Trust. Since then compensation has been awarded to other tribes.

*Mana Maori Motuhake:* "the Maori coming into his own separate rights". This was a short-lived political movement in the early 1920s and a forerunner of Ratana. It aimed at complete separation of Maoris and Europeans for the purposes of government, advocated the creation of a Maori parliament to control Maori Affairs, and demanded the abolition of the Public Trust, the Native Land Boards, and the Native Land Courts.

*Ratana Independent Movement.* The Ratana political movement arose during the early 1920s out of the Messianic teachings of T. W. Ratana. Emphasis was placed on the separateness of the Morehu or "remnant" of the Maori people and there was a desire to emulate European skills and way of life. Ratana believed that tribal differences would hinder development along these lines and he made his followers sign a covenant of loyalty to his movement. He insisted that the Maori members of Parliament should be representatives of the race rather than of their respective tribes and in January 1928 he selected four of his followers to contest elections. After 1935 Ratana's preoccupation with Maori welfare induced him to seek a political alliance with the New Zealand Labour Party. From 1938 until 1963 all Maori Labour candidates were also ministers in the Ratana Church. On the land question Ratana generally accepted Ngata's development schemes.

*Kauhanganui Independent Group.* This made its appearance as a political group during the early years of the twentieth century. It has the backing of the elders and chiefs of the Waikato tribes and is thus closely associated with the "King" movement, which has ceased to be a political force in itself. While Kauhanganui is no longer separatist, it seeks to protect Maori lands from further confiscation and calls for the revision of New Zealand statutes to remove all provisions oppressive to the Maoris.

*Independent Maori Group.* This was formed in the Bay of Plenty area in 1960 and aims at securing Maori representatives in Parliament who are not tied to any particular party. It advocates the retention of Maori lands by the Maoris and a policy for their proper utilisation – including lower rates of interest for development loans. In this respect the group appears to follow Sir A. T. Ngata and to oppose the Ratana movement.

## Recent Trends

The Ratana group has held the balance between the European parliamentary parties on two occasions, between 1946 and 1949 and, again, between 1957 and 1960. Even with this advantage, however, the Maori members were unable to secure a final settlement of their traditional complaints. As a result, the Ratana-sponsored members appear to be losing prestige among some sections of the Maori electorate; in the 1963 election, for instance, the Labour Party successfully sponsored a non-Ratana candidate for Eastern Maori.

For the future, it is probable that, as more Maoris become integrated in the European community, Maori conservatism will gradually lose its significance. If, as is sometimes suggested by the Maoris themselves, their separate representation were abolished, and they were included in one common Maori-Pakeha electoral roll, this process might be greatly accelerated.

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