

Story: Kotahitanga – unity movements

Page 4 – Kotahitanga movements in the 20th and 21st century

(Keane, B., 2012c)

Rātana and political parties

1881
1990

While known primarily for its religious focus, the Rātana movement had a significant political and social aspect. A thriving community based around prophet Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana's teachings sprung up at Rātana pā, near Marton. The Rātana movement was a nationalist political movement which agitated for recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi and managed to win all four Māori seats. In 1924 Rātana planned to present to King George V a petition signed by 45,000 Māori (two-thirds of the Māori population) regarding breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi. This did not happen, as the New Zealand government opposed it, but it did bring the treaty back into prominence.

Later Māori-centred political parties included Mana Motuhake, founded by Matiu Rata in 1979 and, later, the Māori Party, founded in 2004 and led by Tariana Turia and Pita Sharples.

The Māori War Effort Organisation

This group arose out of the formation of the 28th (Māori) Battalion. It had proved difficult to recruit Māori soldiers using the electoral roll, as there was no requirement for voter registration for the Māori electoral roll. Members of Parliament Paraire Paikea and Eruera Tirikātene developed a strategy to recruit Māori in 1942. A parliamentary committee was formed consisting of the four Māori members of Parliament and Rangi Māwhete of the Legislative Council (upper house). Twenty-one districts were established and 315 tribal committees were formed. The structure allowed tribal input and Māori organisation at a national level.

Māori Women's Welfare League

The Māori Women's Welfare League (Te Rōpū Wāhine Māori Toko i te Ora) had its first conference in 1951. Delegates came from women's welfare committees established by Māori welfare officers under the direction of Te Rangiataahua (Rangi) Royal. Whina Cooper was the first president and Miraka (Mira) Petricevich (later Szászy) was the first secretary. The league's activities became important as Māori went through a period of urbanisation in the mid-20th century. While the league's activities were primarily focused on social issues, political lobbying was also significant.

New Zealand Māori Council

One of the criticisms of the New Zealand Māori Council was that the structure was controlled by the government. Despite this, from 1987 it had important success with a number of cases against the Crown, which won major concessions for Māori.

The New Zealand Māori Council

A modified version of the Māori War Effort Organisation was set up after the Second World War under the Maori Social and Economic Advancement Act 1945. The structure consisted of tribal committees (later called Māori committees) overseen by executive committees which were organised within the Native Affairs Department. The tribal committees were elected once every three years. Any Māori adult within the boundaries of a tribal committee was entitled to vote.

Under the Maori Welfare Act 1962 the formation of district councils changed to be based on Māori Land Court areas, and the National Māori Council (Dominion Council) was made up of delegates from the district councils.

National Māori Congress

The National Māori Congress was founded at Tūrangawaewae marae, Ngāruawāhia, on 14 July 1990. It was similar to the New Zealand Māori council but was independent of government controls. It had representatives from 37 iwi, but was limited in its ability to speak on iwi matters. It would instead represent Māori views on issues relevant to all Māori.

Protest movements

During the 1970s and 1980s a number of protest movements arose with a Māori focus. Issues these movements protested about included Māori land rights, Māori language, anti-apartheid and anti-racism. These groups included the Waitangi Action Committee (WAC), Ngā Tamatoa, Māori People's Liberation Movement of Aotearoa and the Māori Organisation on Human Rights (MOOHR). Ngā Tamatoa and the Te Reo Māori Society took a petition to Parliament in 1971 about the Māori language and protests began on Waitangi Day. Most of these groups were pan-Māori organisations.

3rd priorities

As various trusts and incorporated societies worked to assist Māori in an urban environment, large urban authorities came into existence. Better known ones include Manukau Urban Māori Authority (MUMA) and Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust in West Auckland. These groups are pan-Māori organisations that provide health and social services to urban Māori regardless of tribal affiliation.

How to cite this page:

Basil Keane, 'Kotahitanga – unity movements - Kotahitanga movements in the 20th and 21st centuries', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/kotahitanga-unity-movements/page-4> (accessed 12 December 2016)
Full story by Basil Keane, published 20 Jun 2012

All text licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 New Zealand Licence unless otherwise stated. Commercial re-use may be allowed on request. All non-text content is subject to specific conditions. © Crown Copyright.

