



Full transcript of speech in parliament by Hon Tariana Turia

28 January 2013

Reply to the Prime Minister's Speech

Mr Speaker - may I formally acknowledge you and all other members at the onset of this important year, a year in which I hope we can genuinely work together for the best interests of all who call this land home.

For many political commentators the year begins with the annual pilgrimage to Ratana Pa. I acknowledge therefore the enduring legacy of Tahupotiki Wiremu Ratana – the significance of his teachings encompassed in Te Ture Wairua and the ongoing relevance of his message for Te Ture Tangata.

The message of Te Ture Tangata of course deals with Te Mana Motuhake, the concerns of Tangata Whenua for our land claims, and our rights and responsibilities as embodied in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

It is a very strong basis for establishing our priorities for the year and it is always pleasing when those coming to the pa acknowledge those dual objectives of our nationhood.

This year, however, Winston Peters chose the moment to attack the Maori Party for what he labelled "*apartheid policies*."

I cannot let such an outrageous claim stand and I have deliberately waited for this first speech in the House this year, to remind all politicians of our moral and ethical responsibility in the use we make of language for effect.

For the record, the crime of apartheid, as stated by the 2002 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is defined as **inhumane acts of crimes against humanity**, committed in the context of an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other.

In South Africa the government implemented a regime of apartheid, with penalties such as fines, imprisonment and whippings. In 1960 a large group of black citizens in Sharpsville refused to carry their passes. In retaliation the government declared a state of emergency for 156 days leaving 69 people dead and 187 wounded. Thousands of individuals died in custody, frequently after gruesome acts of torture.

How then, does this crime against humanity apply to the introduction of Whanau Ora?

Whanau Ora is about empowering and enabling families to set their own priorities, to focus on outcomes. Common themes in whanau plans include better lives for children, employment, housing and home ownership, education and skills development and health and cultural wellness.

Presumably this is the nature of what Mr Peters labelled “*sociological objectives which are of no interest to Maoridom at all.*”

And while it was pleasing to note that in a different waka, Mr Cunliffe stated he would listen to the voices of Maoridom as to how they want to take Whanau Ora, in the next breath he admitted that he would not keep the policy going as it is, suggesting that Whanau Ora is not something they would limit to Maori and that Labour wanted to extend it to community service agencies and NGOs around the country.

This too, must be challenged. Whanau Ora is already available to any family, any family, who want to support and accept responsibilities and obligations to each other.

The days are gone when progress is measured by what others do to families in the name of development.

Whanau Ora is not about being done to or on behalf of others.

Whanau Ora – which contrary to the view above has been openly embraced by New Zealanders of all cultures and creeds – is about families standing confident and capable to take care of their own.

Call it transformation – call it liberation – this is about a revolution of the masses to set their own direction.

And I really implore our political colleagues to think seriously before they jump in and attack, merely for the sake of gaining traction in the hustings.

I would ask this House to think back to the debates around Section 59 of the Crimes Act where the use of violence as a means of disciplining children was outlawed.

Or more recently, in the wonderful coalition of minds that came together for tobacco reform, to ensure improved health outcomes for all New Zealanders.

Both of these policy initiatives were championed by activists, lobbyists, health professionals, families, children's advocates, academics, and communities. They came together, to mobilise the masses, in the interest of change.

So too, when I look at the 160 providers that have entered into Whanau Ora, and most importantly the 33,000 New Zealanders that have been touched by the impact of positive approaches for whanau and families, I know we are observing a new form of political activism driven by results and by widely felt support.

When people attempt to denigrate their efforts or think they can look from afar and want to meddle in the lives of participating families who have worked so hard to build their collective capacity it makes no sense to me. These same people who for years have created dependence on the state can't think that people can restore self-belief to what they can do for themselves.

Our efforts, this year, will continue to strive for the highest results to make the lives of New Zealand families and whanau better.

We will not resile from that pursuit of excellence at every encounter our families have with the state.

I for one, fully support the Government's mission of five out of five children to succeed in schools. I have no tolerance for accepting mediocrity when the future of our children is at stake.

But I do not believe that by simply pouring more personnel into the school ground will necessarily bring the results. A chorus line of school nurses, social workers, cafeteria caterers and the like will not make the difference we need unless we actively enable our families to be in charge and supporting their children in their educational pathways.

The Maori Party has consistently spoken up about the key priority to address income disparities and we are relentless in our call for government, business and private sector to take seriously the campaign for a living wage.

Finally I want to address the myth-making that is associated with our role as a partner in government.

Our founding president, Matua Whatarangi Winiata always challenged the members of the Maori Party to lift our sights high - to do everything possible to herald improvements for all those who call Aotearoa home.

Our current president, Naida Glavish has continued this theme with the message that the days of doing a haka outside the fence are over.

We have an absolute responsibility to anyone who places their faith in kaupapa Maori as a framework for this nation – and we will not let their aspirations be left to flounder by choosing to sit defeated on the opposition benches.

Our reason for being is to apply every mechanism possible towards strengthening our whanau to do for themselves.

And I make no apology for the investment that we have been able to negotiate in a stronger future. I'm proud that through our work we have achieved an extra \$47 million to support trade training places for 3000 Maori and Pasifika peoples and an additional 400 cadets in the energy, infrastructure or telecommunications industry.

I'm proud that we fought for an extra \$100 million to insulate homes of low-income households, especially those with children or high health needs; increased resources to reduce rheumatic fever; a warrant of fitness trial for Housing New Zealand properties – and 2000 vege gardens.

I am particularly pleased at the wide range of initiatives we have championed to change social attitudes and increase the participation of disabled peoples in all aspects of life and the progress made in enabling Maori and Pasifika families to confront and address family violence within their midst.

And there is so much more – the point is, if our greatest fault is that we stepped up to make a difference for our constituency, by working with then Government, then so be it.

I want to end with talking about the absolute stand-out performance in the Ratana Talent quest : a young Tuwharetoa singer called Jackson Owen who will in a couple of weeks time be making his way to Florida to start his music career. Jackson was '*discovered*' when his whanau uploaded tracks of him singing on YouTube.

If the last 24 hours have told us anything – with backing and support – even a humble schoolgirl can overnight become a two-time grammy award winner.

Wouldn't it be a great day, when our combined efforts could reach across the House to make sure that every child experiences success, that every whanau knows the meaning of Mauriora in their lives?

That is a campaign call I am determined to uphold.