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Ten years ago I would have perceived it inappropriate for me, a Pakeha New Zealander, that is non-Maori, to comment on this topic. My reluctance would have been based on what I saw as my lack of knowledge of things Maori and hence that I could not or should not participate in case I did something wrong. It would have had nothing to do with my understanding of the need for bicultural progress nor my pride in my own culture and love of New Zealand.

I had insufficient knowledge of New Zealand's history, (in spite of having been taught the 'success' story of the New Zealand Company of the 1840's and all that, several times in primary, secondary and university studies.) I presumed I knew what it meant to respect other people's differences but that was another myth of the times. My contact with Maori people was superficial and certainly never addressed the huge issues of biculturalism. I believed that New Zealand treated people fairly (well, most of the time), education for all, 'God's own country' in fact. I was probably a typical middle-class Kiwi.

Luckily, times are changing in New Zealand and in many ways, it is hard to understand why it has taken us so long.

To understand New Zealand's current position in relation to biculturalism, it is important to know some history particularly in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi. This document lays the basis for partnership between Maori and Pakeha. Signed in 1840 by Maori Chiefs and English officials for the Crown, the Treaty of Waitangi was produced in both languages. In international law the version written in Maori is the official recognised one, but over the past 150 years successive governments and individuals have interpreted and manipulated

the Treaty of Waitangi in accordance with their own wishes.

This is no longer acceptable for a number of reasons:

- the international legal recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi;
- the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal by the Government in 1975 to investigate Maori grievances like confiscation of land;
- the growing awareness internationally of the rights of indigenous peoples;
- a growing voice from Maoridom seeking to redress the situation.

It is impossible for libraries not to be caught up in all this. Over the years individual librarians and libraries have struggled to raise awareness and to implement actions, and in 1953 the then New Zealand Library Association was urged to initiate, promote and monitor bicultural action. The fact that the same request resurfaced in the 1990's is a sad reflection on the lack of progress.

There are three Articles in the Treaty of Waitangi, and they raise important issues for libraries and information services of partnership in government and shared decision making, preservation of treasures (not least of which is an oral culture and tradition), and matters of equity. A partnership of Maori and Pakeha must work together in matters of ownership, conservation, guardianship, and the issues of equity: literacy, access, education, training for librarianship. How could anyone deny the advantages of this? It is obvious there will be a strengthening of the country as we put these into effect. We are really only just beginning: what will a bicultural country be like in the 21st Century?

Some of the initiatives in New Zealand libraries and information serv-

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ices are far reaching and others are more individualised. Major impact is coming from Te Roopu Whakaha— the Maori Library workers' Network which has only been in existence for a very short period of time. The NZLIA seeks a way for the two to be affiliated as it explores the partnership. A bicultural special interest group, amongst other things, has commissioned research and this will be published shortly. The project was assisted financially by many New Zealand libraries who responded in a new way on the grounds that it would be of benefit to them all, to their clients and to all New Zealanders. NZLIA is promoting training in biculturally related areas, initially with office holders and gradually but steadily out to the membership as a whole.

A major project sprang from the "N" Strategy which seeks to draw up a national action plan for the country for the 1990's. For many, the annual conference of the NZLIA in Nelson in 1992 introduced a style and content which epitomised the commitment to bicultural progress. The profession was moved by it. A Maori subject thesaurus in preparation is much sought after to improve access for users to collections. All these initiatives are contributing to the current evolving situation.

Some see tokenism, but that is unfortunate as every initiative adds to the progress whether for individuals or millions. Biculturalism can only succeed when a majority of parties are prepared to listen and understand each others' views.

I was once challenged as to why I am involved in bicultural issues. In some ways there has been no choice. When all New Zealanders are literate, self determining individuals, library comfortable and informed about global issues and their own personal needs, we can afford to rest a little. ■