

Politically Correct Corrections

Who would have thought that a woman taking a front-row seat at a graduation ceremony for offenders would have caused such uproar? Unfortunately, asking women to sit behind men at such ceremonies is just the tip of the iceberg as far as political correctness in the Department of Corrections goes.

At previous ceremonies, we had been told that "the men protect the women" and "the men are like gods when they speak and the women support them". Just before this particular graduation ceremony, I offered to make a speech, but this was ignored, as women aren't allowed to speak during the Maori part of the proceedings. Whatever sugar coating people want to put on it, the women are definitely subordinate.

Needless to say, the department thinks it's doing a wonderful job introducing all this Maori culture. However, it fails to see that in doing so it is imposing many outdated beliefs and attitudes on offenders and staff.

On this occasion, there were women as well as men graduating from the anti-crime programme. How do they feel about having these sexist attitudes imposed on them? And surely it sets a bad example to male offenders by promoting an attitude of male superiority.

The Department of Corrections seems to think that because something is part of Maori culture, it's good. Clearly, lots of aspects of Maori culture aren't good and should be done

away with. Just as cannibalism has gone, so too should the sexism inherent in these ceremonies. Cultures aren't set in concrete. They change as time goes by. Otherwise, we'd still be living in caves and women would be the chattels of men.

We can't make Maoris change their own ceremonies in their own domains. However, when it involves general society, we cannot put up with this affront to human rights. It amazes me

that the first country in the world to give women the vote has become so politically correct it tolerates such nonsense.

Along with the sexism, which is promoted in these ceremonies, there is also religion. Prayers have become part and parcel of them and they've even introduced prayers at staff meetings. I feel rather sorry for the offenders who go on these programmes, often with good intentions, and get bombarded with religion. Apparently, it's up to the Department of Corrections to teach them about their "spirituality".

Of course, those offenders who admit to having any Maori blood whatsoever are subject to special treatment. If they have some Maori blood, even a smidgeon, but don't identify as Maori, then they are deemed to have "Lack of Pride". What an insult!

Those that do identify themselves as Maori are also assessed for the other "Maori Culture-Related Needs". These include such things as "Whanau Social Influence to Crime"

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and "Limited or Lack of Whanau Contact". It seems non-Maori offenders are a totally different species and don't suffer from such family problems.

Maori offenders are encouraged to go on a Maori culture programme to learn about things Maori. Only Maoris are allowed to attend and there are no equivalent cultural courses for those of other races. Clearly, another racist policy.

It is not up to the Department of Corrections to teach offenders about what they think their culture should be. It is up to each individual to become involved in cultural traditions or not, as they choose. A Maori (or Scot or Samoan or Chinese) may choose to be involved in traditional practices or not. It is a personal choice and has no bearing on whether or not that person takes to a life of crime.

And who decides what the culture is? Culture can be totally different for each individual on the planet and changes for each person over time. How patronising that the Department of Corrections has decided that it

is the authority on what Maori culture is!

The Department of Corrections has a lot of other politically correct policies, some of which are common to other government departments. These include only employing and/or promoting those who agree with "the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi"; separate Maori units and religious units in prisons; allowing visits outside prison visiting times for kaumatuas; having staff support networks for Maori and Pacific Island staff only, and giving preference to minority races in employment.

This political correctness means that advantages are given to particular groups, meaning that everyone else is disadvantaged. It goes

against the concept of equal treatment for all and imposes attitudes and beliefs, which are contrary to natural justice and basic human rights.

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Regards

Muriel Newman
(founder & director of NZCPD)

