

# Newman Weekly

By Dr. Muriel Newman  
26 November 2006



The New Zealand Centre for Political Debate

## Where Others Fear to Tread

The resignation of Don Brash this week has signaled the loss to New Zealand of a political leader who displayed a courage not usually seen in politics. Dr Brash spoke about race relations in an open and frank manner that has now become quite uncommon. These days, under the present politically correct regime, saying what you believe about controversial issues can lead to job losses, a failure to secure contracts or funding, a missing out of promotion, and so on. That doesn't mean that concerns go away - they simply go 'underground'.

That is why Dr Brash's "Nationhood" speech, delivered to the Orewa Rotary Club on January 27<sup>th</sup> 2004, struck such a chord with the public and electrified the nation. In his plain speaking way, he went where others fear to tread.

The speech resurrected the National Party, delivering them from virtual political oblivion to within a hair's breadth of the Treasury benches, because New Zealanders saw that they were committed to tackling these very serious and difficult problems. Furthermore Dr Brash rode through the political storm with his head held high knowing that not only had he spoken honestly, but from his heart.

In his speech he asked a fundamental question: "what sort of nation do we want to build? Is it to be a modern democratic society embodying the essential notion of one rule for all in a single nation state? Or is it a racially divided nation, with two sets of laws, and two standards of citizenship, that the present Labour government is moving us steadily towards?"

He wanted to set the record straight: "Let me be quite clear. Many things happened to the Maori people that should not have happened. There were injustices, and the Treaty process is an attempt to acknowledge that, and to make a gesture at recompense. But it is only that. It *can* be no more than that. None of us was around at the time of the New Zealand wars. None of us had anything to do with the confiscations. There is a limit to how much any generation can apologise for the sins of its great

grandparents".

Dr Brash criticised the current direction of race relations: "the dangerous drift towards racial separatism in New Zealand and the development of the now entrenched Treaty grievance industry". He stressed that "we are one country with many peoples, not simply a society of Pakeha and Maori where the minority has a birthright to the upper hand, as the Labour Government seems to believe".

He also raised concerns about how the inclusion into environmental laws, of special rights for consultation with Maori, had resulted in the growth of state-sanctioned "corruption": an opportunistic "farce" of allowing metaphysical and spiritual considerations, such as wahi tapu and taniwha, to be taken into account in the local and central government decision-making process. He warned: "We are becoming a society that allows people to invent or rediscover beliefs for pecuniary gain. This process is becoming deeply corrupt, with some requirements for consultation resulting in substantial payments in a system that looks like nothing other than stand-over tactics".

Dr Brash explained that the Treaty process should not be used "as the basis for creating greater civil, political or democratic rights for Maori than for any other New Zealander. He warned that: "In the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is unconscionable for us to be taking that separatist path, and this Labour Government deserves to be defeated on that basis alone". He also warned that: "Too many Maori leaders are looking backwards rather than towards the future. Too many have been encouraged by successive governments to adopt grievance mode".

In his speech, Don Brash quoted Chris Trotter, an unashamedly left-wing political commentator who had asked in the DomPost of December 12, 2003 whether New Zealand will "go forward into a new century as a modern democratic and prosperous nation; or shall it become a culturally divided economically stagnant and aristocratically misgoverned Pacific backwater, like the

Kingdom of Tonga or the Republic of Fiji?"

Three years on, with instability and political unrest in both of those nations, it is clear that ethnic separation is not the way to build a strong nation.

Dr Brash outlined the approach of the National Party: "We intend to remove divisive race-based features from legislation. The 'principles of the Treaty' – never clearly defined yet ever expanding – are the thin edge of the wedge leading to a racially divided state and we want no part of that. There can be no basis for special privileges for any race, no basis for government funding based on race, no basis for introducing Maori wards in local authority elections, and no obligations for local government to consult Maori in preference to other New Zealanders. We will remove the anachronism of the Maori seats in Parliament".

He concluded by saying that "In many ways I am deeply saddened to have to make a speech about issues of race. In this country, it should not matter what colour you are, or what your ethnic origins might be... But we must build a modern, prosperous, democratic nation based on one rule for all. We cannot allow the loose threads of 19<sup>th</sup> century law and custom to unravel our attempts at nation building in the 21<sup>st</sup> century".

In 1922, Sir Apirana Ngata wrote a book entitled "The Treaty of Waitangi" in which he explained why the Treaty had been so necessary. He explained how the Treaty was introduced during "lawless" times: "The Treaty found us in the throes of cannibalism". "This was a time when Maori tribes were fighting fiercely amongst themselves, ...when Maori were murdered by Europeans ...and Maori

murdered Europeans. Guns and powder were the goods most desired by each tribe, when chiefly women were given away and lands were sold".

He explained how Article One of the Treaty transferred "the authority of the Maori chief for making laws for their respective tribes and sub-tribes under the Treaty of Waitangi to the Queen of England for ever"; how Article Two established private property rights: "The Queen did not do anything to take away the rights of the Maori over his lands, instead she made ownership permanent and truly established"; and how Article Three was "the greatest benefit bestowed by the Queen on Maori people", explaining that "the Queen of England extends to the Maori people of New Zealand her royal protection. She imparts to them all the rights and privileges of British subjects".

He concludes his book by stating the Treaty "made the *one law* for the Maori and the Pakeha" and he had a warning for those unhappy about the Treaty: "If you think these things are wrong and bad then blame our ancestors who gave away their rights in the days when they were powerful".

As a result of the resignation of Don Brash, the question is: who will pick up the mantle and speak the truth about these difficult issues? Will it be National, ACT or a new party?

**The poll this week** asks: Do you believe the National Party should remain committed to the principles outlined in Don Brash's Nationhood speech?

## Supporting the NZ Centre for Political Debate

If you enjoy reading Newman Weekly and value independent political discussion then I'm inviting you to consider becoming a member of the New Zealand Centre for Political Debate.

The NZCPD is an influential political force and provides a much needed independent voice on political issues. But life is all about reality and the NZCPD relies on the support and goodwill of others to continue. Contributions both big and small are most welcome.

The support levels range from a subscriber who receives Newman Weekly and has an opportunity to participate in our discussion forums, to those who would like to be foundation supporters or benefactors.

Thanks so much for your interest in Newman Weekly and taking the time to read this message. To find out more about how you can support us visit [www.nzcpd.com](http://www.nzcpd.com).