

HIST480

The Māori Land March of 1975: The
Crossroads of Modern New Zealand

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Abstract

This research essay examines the mainstream media representation of the 1975 Māori Land March in order to explore a time of change in New Zealand's race relations. The 1970s is considered the beginning of New Zealand's "Māori Renaissance" and the Land March foreshadowed a new cultural agenda that would eventually see the Treaty of Waitangi play a greater role in New Zealand society. I consider the degree to which the Māori voice was evident in the media examination of the Land March and whether this was considered a valid perspective. In addition, I examine the impact of the dominant Pākehā cultural paradigm in the media treatment of the March and consider the various viewpoints regarding the nature and validity of the event. The extent to which the media supported the Land March was limited to the protest's manifestation as a moderate-liberal approach to change. The coverage exposed a sense of apathy in the media and a lack of serious acknowledgement of the events at hand. Overall, the media representation of the Land March revealed that reactions to the event were complex and nuanced and that an impending shift in New Zealand's race relations agenda was regarded with caution.

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List of Abbreviations

Memorial of Rights (MOR)

Te Roopu O Te Matakite (TRM)

Television New Zealand (TVNZ)

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Figure One: Cartoon representing breakaway group of protestors.....35

Use of Macrons

Macrons indicate the correct pronunciation of a long vowel in te reo Māori. When I have quoted or cited the work of others, I have included macrons only if these were used in the original source.

Introduction

‘Is our society guilty of perpetuating inequalities between Māori and Pākehā that for so long have been... regarded as belonging to history rather than to the present as well?’¹

The Māori Land March of September and October 1975 was the first major protest event in the wider Māori land rights movement. Concern over land loss amongst Māori reached a climax in the second half of the twentieth century as Māori land continued to be placed under the realm of government control. Despite relatively frequent reference to the importance of the Land March in general New Zealand History texts, in-depth and critical discussion of the event is noticeably sparse. The event is usually examined within a wider conversation surrounding the Māori Renaissance, or, within the general history of race relations. The March itself was well-publicised as urban-centred Māori protest had become the subject of widespread media attention from the late 1960s.² There is, therefore, a comprehensive and readily accessible source base available to consider the nature of the Land March in greater detail.

This research essay examines how the Land March was portrayed in the mainstream media coverage of the time; it compares and contrasts the event’s representation between the different media fora. I consider the extent to which the Māori voice was evident in the media examination of the Land March and whether this was considered a valid point of view. Within this, there is a focus on the degree to which the background of the event was

¹ “Te Puna Wai Kōrero: 1975-09-18,” *Te Puna Wai Kōrero*, National Radio, New Zealand, 18 September, 1975 (Sound Archives number: 40402).

² Tom Brooking, *The History of New Zealand* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), 147; Paul Spoonley, “Racism, Race Relations and the Media,” in *Between the Lines: Racism and the New Zealand Media*, eds. Paul Spoonley and Walter Hirsh (Auckland: Heinemann Reed, 1990), 27.

explained as such context usually reflected a pro-March standpoint. In addition, I examine the impact of the dominant Pākehā cultural paradigm in the media treatment of the March. A further area of inquiry is that of exploring the various viewpoints regarding the nature and validity of the event. Overall, detailed study of the media representation of the Land March reveals that the event was met with a complex and nuanced response. This has not been recognised in the secondary literature where the event is generally represented as a remarkably unified affair. The Māori Land March was a pivotal moment in determining New Zealand's modern race relations and an analysis of the media surrounding the event provides insight into these changing times.

Methodology, Sources and Limitations

The research draws upon both the secondary discussion of the Land March (chapter one) and a body of secondary literature articulated by media scholars that considers the portrayal of Māori and Māori issues in the media (chapter two). The primary sources I have used are all mainstream media fora and as such embody a common factor to allow a comparable discussion. This includes newspaper articles, editorials and letters to the editor from *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion*, *The Times*³, *The Press* and *The Otago Daily Times* as well as archived radio and television coverage from Radio New Zealand and Television New Zealand (TVNZ) respectively. As such, the study does not include analysis of te reo Māori fora nor of smaller rural newspapers as I seek to uncover how the event was portrayed in the mainstream discourse. These areas, nevertheless, may provide valuable avenues for future discussion.

³ Between 1968 and 1976 *The Waikato Times* was known simply as *The Times*. See, "Waikato Times," Papers Past, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>.

The Land March received extensive coverage in the main daily newspaper publications in each of New Zealand's main centres. Therefore, the newspaper coverage forms the core of my source base. Attention accorded to the March varied between regions. *The Dominion* and *The New Zealand Herald* considered the event in the greatest detail. Coverage in *The Dominion* particularly increased at the end of the March when a breakaway group of protestors remained camped at Parliament grounds. It is likely that was a matter of locality, although, as discussed below, this also may have been impacted by the paper's editorial stance. Also in terms of locality, the South Island coverage was not only smaller in scope but also largely based upon Press Association reports. This was in comparison to the North Island coverage which was more often written by reporters following the March. It is also noteworthy that the editorial position of the South Island coverage came across as more conservative.

The editorial stance of each of the newspapers in question no doubt differed and it must be acknowledged that while the political affiliations of New Zealand newspapers were less explicit by the 1970s, each of the newspapers had historically competed against rival publications.⁴ Nonetheless, the official position of each newspaper's editorial policy in the 1970s was difficult to ascertain as it is an area that has not been researched.⁵ In response to this, I conducted two email interviews with a journalist and an ex-journalist/academic who are knowledgeable in the area of 1970s New Zealand media. These interviewees are referred

⁴ "The Dominion," Papers Past, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>; "New Zealand Herald," Papers Past, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>; "Otago Daily Times," Papers Past, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>; "Press," Papers Past, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>; "Waikato Times," Papers Past, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>.

⁵ Patrick Day notes in the introduction to his book that there is little information available when researching New Zealand newspapers. He emphasises that even 'basic information such as the number of newspapers that have been published is not available.' See, Patrick Day, *The Making of the New Zealand Press: A Study of the Organisation and Political Concerns of New Zealand Newspaper Controllers, 1840-1880* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990), 2.

to as ‘Journalist One’ and ‘Journalist Two’ respectively. Their names have been kept anonymous to comply with ethical requirements.

This research is grounded in a methodological determination to consider a variety of source types following a fundamental tenet of the social-historical approach to look beyond the written document. The Sound Archives of New Zealand/Ngā Taonga Kōrero holds a small collection of items relating to the Land March. While no radio news coverage of the event was archived, there is an assortment of programmes, interviews and selected live coverage concerning the March. The sample itself is limited; there are nine English-language items that relate directly to the event. Eight of these items were recorded in 1975 while the final item was recorded in January 1976 and considered the most important events in Māoridom for the previous year. Despite the small sample size, the audio items provide a useful avenue to consider the media representation of the Land March beyond the written document.

In the process of researching the archived television footage surrounding the Land March, various limitations were exposed. Firstly, some of the films had “blanks” in them - that is, there were passages where there was no audio or images because over the years pieces had been physically cut out for other purposes. Audio was also sometimes superimposed on the visual footage at a later stage. Furthermore, on occasion it was difficult to tell if the footage was actually broadcast because unless it was specifically catalogued as belonging to a programme then it was simply archived under the broad categories “news,” “archive news,” or “stock footage.” Like the material from the Sound Archives, some of the bibliographical details of the footage contained in the TVNZ archive were questionable. It is important to bear these limitations in mind when considering the archived television footage as again it is an examination of a narrow sample.

Finally, *Te Matakite O Aotearoa: The Māori Land March* was a documentary produced in 1975 by the Auckland-based company Seehear Productions in conjunction with TV2.⁶ Directors of the production company, Geoff Steven and Philip Dadson, were granted exclusive rights to film the Land March by Te Roopu O Te Matakite.⁷ The production team lived with the marchers during the event.⁸ It is thus reasonable to conclude that the production company had successfully earned the respect of the community for which they were acting on behalf of and, as such, this was likely to impact the viewpoint purported in the documentary.

⁶ *Te Matakite O Aotearoa*, directed by Geoff Steven, Auckland, New Zealand: Seehear Productions and TV2, 1975.

⁷ “The Land March for TV,” *The Press*, September 24, 1975, 4.

⁸ Ibid.

Chapter One

Background

The 1960s and 1970s were decades characterised by political activism and protest; this was a worldwide trend. Major protests of the period covered issues including the Vietnam War, women's and civil rights and environmental concerns.⁹ Within this protest climate, there was a worldwide increase in Indigenous political agitation.¹⁰ New Zealand's Māori Land March was part of this international story in which Indigenous people sought a greater degree of self-determination and increasingly asserted their cultural identity.¹¹

By the 1970s, land loss was both a historic grievance and a contemporary concern for the Māori people. Throughout the twentieth century, the New Zealand Government had progressively undermined Māori sovereignty through a series of Acts which placed more and more land in government hands.¹² The catalyst in the increased resentment during the latter half of the century was the 1967 Māori Affairs Amendment Act, or, as it was commonly known, 'the last land grab.'¹³ Other acts pertaining to public works, rates and government schemes also provided impetus for action, however, the 1967 Act was the culmination of official attempts to place Māori-owned land under the realm of government control.¹⁴

The Māori Land March was organised and led by the group Te Roopu O Te Matakite (TRM); the word 'matakite' means 'seers or prophetic visionaries' and its usage signalled the

⁹ Ken S. Coates, *A Global History of Indigenous Peoples: Struggle and Survival* (Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 238.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 237-239.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 240.

¹² Aroha Harris, *Hiko: Forty Years of Māori Protest* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2004), 68.

¹³ Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whaiwhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*, 1st ed. (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1990), 212.

¹⁴ Michael King, *Whina: A Biography of Whina Cooper* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1983), 206; Philippa Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 239.

solemnity of the event.¹⁵ The group was established early in 1975 with Whina Cooper as its leader.¹⁶ Cooper instigated the Land March as she believed that other organisations had not sufficiently addressed Māori land grievances through other more liberal actions such as making submissions to Parliament.¹⁷ The March was a peaceful protest which had the overall aim of raising awareness of Māori land loss for both Māori and Pākehā.¹⁸ Land loss was a cause that transcended differences within Māoridom and it was recognised that the issue could be used as a starting point to focus Pākehā attention on the wider grievances facing Māori in contemporary society.¹⁹

In an action laden with symbolism, the marchers started the journey on 14 September 1975 to Parliament from Te Hapua, New Zealand's northernmost marae, near Spirits Bay where the Māori dead are said to depart for Hawaiiki, the resting place of the ancestors.²⁰ Fifty people comprised the hard-core of the marchers who covered 1100 kilometres over 30 days.²¹ During the March, 30-40,000 people joined the ranks for shorter periods of time usually as the protest passed through their local area.²² The marchers carried a Memorial of Rights (MOR) demanding the repeal of all statutes that 'could alienate, designate or confiscate Māori land.'²³ The MOR was signed by 200 rangatira as the marchers passed through 25 marae en route to Wellington and the public demonstrated their support through a general petition which attracted 60,000 signatures.²⁴ When the marchers arrived at Parliament on 13

¹⁵ Walker, *Ka Whaiwhai Tonu Matou*, 214.

¹⁶ King, *Whina*, 207; Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2003), 476.

¹⁷ Walker, *Ka Whaiwhai Tonu Matou*, 214.

¹⁸ James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2001), 478; Richard S. Hill, *Maori and the State: Crown-Maori Relations in New Zealand/Aotearoa, 1950-2000* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2009), 167.

¹⁹ Harris, *Hikoi*, 70.

²⁰ Robert Consedine and Joanna Consedine, *Healing Our History: The Challenge of the Treaty of Waitangi*, 2nd ed. (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2012), 106.

²¹ Harris, *Hikoi*, 74.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁴ Jenny Carlyon and Diana Morrow, *Changing Times: New Zealand Since 1945* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2013), 259; Harris, *Hikoi*, 74.

October 1975, approximately 5000 people were met by Prime Minister Bill Rowling who assured the crowd that their efforts had not been in vain.²⁵

On the last day of the March, a splinter group remained at Parliament grounds and set up a tent embassy as the marchers had become divided over what was the next course of action.²⁶

This breakaway group were determined not to move until they received written assurance that the demands of TRM would be met by the Government. However, by the end of October, following a heated debate as to whether the encampment was lawful, the splinter group embarked on a second march to raise further awareness of Māori land issues and just two tents remained at Parliament to provide a continued presence.²⁷

Aroha Harris summarises the historiographical position on the situation with the splinter group:

The aftermath of the march is often viewed with some regret, but bringing together such a disparate collection of groups and interests, even for a short time, is a huge accomplishment rarely achieved, and testament to the depth of feeling about the land issue. The conduct of the march itself cannot be faulted; its dignity has made a permanent impression on New Zealand History.²⁸

Indeed, the Land March is generally remembered in the secondary literature as an event that demonstrated an extraordinary show of unity amongst the Māori people. Paul Moon, for example, concludes that the March illustrated the extent of concern evident in Māoridom regarding current and future threats to culture and landholdings.²⁹ Similarly, Claudia Orange emphasises that there was a sense of unity over the issues at stake amongst both young and old members of Māoridom.³⁰

²⁵ Harris, *Hikoi*, 76.

²⁶ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 478.

²⁷ “Two Tents Stay at Parliament,” *The New Zealand Herald*, October 30, 1975, 1.

²⁸ Harris, *Hikoi*, 76.

²⁹ Paul Moon, *Turning Points: Events that Changed the Course of New Zealand History* (Auckland: New Holland Publishers, 2013), 192-193.

³⁰ Claudia Orange, *An Illustrated History of the Treaty of Waitangi* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books Ltd, 2004), 146.

Previously, protests by young, radical Māori, such as those of Ngā Tamatoa, were dismissed by the wider New Zealand public to be representative of only a minority, radical Māori opinion. The sheer scale of the Land March, therefore, stood to ‘dispel this presumption.’³¹ The March drew attention to Māori land loss on a scale that had never been seen before.³² Most importantly, the event is credited for its role in the process of bringing the Treaty of Waitangi back to prominence in contemporary New Zealand society.³³

The Wider Context

At the end of the 1970s, it was clear that a Māori renaissance of sorts was taking place. Moon describes the period as a ‘rebirth of Maori identity for the modern age which would involve various struggles over the next two decades in order for Maori culture and identity to be preserved and rejuvenated.’³⁴ A resurgence of the Māori voice was particularly evident from the 1960s as a progressively urban and educated Māori populace had become increasingly resentful towards the low status and value accorded to Māori ways.³⁵ This resentment is cited for the rise of urban protest groups who came to question the dominance of Pākehā culture.³⁶

Amidst this renaissance spirit, the Land March went beyond simply drawing attention to Māori land loss to emphasise to wider New Zealand society that colonial injustices had also resulted in a loss of culture and autonomy. Richard Hill goes as far as declaring that the March ‘was not so much about specific land policies, or necessarily, even about land at all. It

³¹ Paul Moon, *New Zealand in the Twentieth Century* (Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), 465.

³² Carlyon and Morrow, *Changing Times*, 258; King, *Whina*, 228; Moon, *New Zealand in the Twentieth Century*, 465.

³³ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 478; Consedine and Consedine, *Healing Our History*, 107; Moon, *Turning Points*, 200.

³⁴ Moon, *Turning Points*, 192.

³⁵ Hill, *Maori and the State*, 149; Moon, *Turning Points*, 191; King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 481.

³⁶ King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 481.

was a reassertion of autonomist Māori demands and aspirations at a time when the political and social climate was becoming more receptive to them.’³⁷ In fact, it may be a mistake to speak of a Māori renaissance as what was really new was a change in Pākehā consciousness. James Belich asserts that by the 1970s Pākehā were more likely to acknowledge Māori grievances as they too were part of an increasingly decolonised society.³⁸ While a new urban consciousness, based on a national identity distinct from tribal identity, had emerged amongst Māori, what was most important was that Pākehā awareness of Māori issues began to grow.³⁹

Nevertheless, race relations in New Zealand reached a crossroads in the 1970s when activists began to take to the streets to draw attention to the Crown’s continuing subjugation of Māori culture and autonomy. The rising tide of activism destroyed the long-held myth that New Zealand was an egalitarian paradise with exceptional race relations.⁴⁰ The persuasiveness of this myth weakened particularly after World War Two as Māori and Pākehā came to live in closer proximity.⁴¹ Moreover, the idea that New Zealand was not a racial utopia was met with antagonism by some New Zealanders. Moon suggests that the display of unity demonstrated by Māori in the Land March bewildered many Pākehā as it was commonly believed that Māori had the best living standards of all Indigenous peoples.⁴² Similarly, Māori challenges to the dominant culture of the 1970s threatened the status quo for Pākehā who began to feel that their own rights as New Zealanders may be undermined.⁴³ This was despite the fact that the refrain that we are “all New Zealanders” usually served to marginalise non-Pākehā as

³⁷ Hill, *Maori and the State*, 169.

³⁸ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 475.

³⁹ Tom Brooking, *The History of New Zealand*, 147; Hill, *Maori and the State*, 151.

⁴⁰ Giselle Byrnes, *The Waitangi Tribunal and New Zealand History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004), 34; Carlyon and Morrow, *Changing Times*, 247; Miranda Johnson, “The Land of the Wrong White Cloud: Anti-Racist Organisations and Pakeha Identity Politics in the 1970s,” *New Zealand Journal of History* 39 (2005): 137; Rangnui Walker, “The Role of the Press in Defining Pakeha Perceptions of the Maori,” in *Between the Lines: Racism and the New Zealand Media*, eds. Paul Spoonley and Walter Hirsh (Auckland: Heinemann Reed, 1990), 39.

⁴¹ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 475; Carlyon and Morrow, *Changing Times*, 248.

⁴² Moon, *New Zealand in the Twentieth Century*, 466.

⁴³ Johnson, “The Land of the Wrong White Cloud,” 152.

the dominant Pākehā culture was unwilling to define New Zealand identity beyond their own cultural paradigm.⁴⁴

By the 1970s, race relations received greater attention in New Zealand's public agenda. The Race Relations Act was passed in 1971 promising to 'affirm and promote racial equality in New Zealand.'⁴⁵ This Act was New Zealand's legislative response to the 1965 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.⁴⁶ This response illustrates official recognition of a shift in New Zealand's race relations. In terms of land loss, the defining issue of 1970s Māori activism, the Government had already begun to address the issues presented by the land marchers. This happened, for example, through the enactment of the Treaty of Waitangi Act. This Act was passed on 10 October 1975, just three days before the Land March arrived at Parliament.⁴⁷ Indeed, the March provided the final push for the enactment of this legislation. Nevertheless, those involved in the March represented a clear sector of Māoridom that was not placated by this legislative response.⁴⁸ At the time, the Act stipulated that only contemporary claims could be heard by the Waitangi Tribunal despite most land loss having occurred in the nineteenth century Land Wars.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 137.

⁴⁵ Carlyon and Morrow, *Changing Times*, 252.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Moon, *New Zealand in the Twentieth Century*, 466.

⁴⁸ Walker, *Ka Whaiwhai Tonu Matou*, 212.

Chapter Two

Media Treatment of Māori

Beginning in the early colonial period, Māori were subjugated in mainstream media discourse as the settlers sought to import European culture to the corners of the Empire.⁴⁹ This subjugation occurred in two ways. Firstly, Māori and the Māori world were rarely discussed in the colonial media unless something or someone had inhibited on European society and disrupted the usual state of affairs.⁵⁰ Further to this, a partnership between Māori and Pākehā in early media ventures never took off.⁵¹ Secondly, representations of Māori in the early settler society were constantly distorted to support European power.⁵² This situation was mirrored in early nineteenth-century examples of New Zealand art where European artists consistently portrayed Māori as barbarians and cannibals.⁵³ By depicting Māori as a group of primitive savages, the establishment of an enlightened European colony could be justified.⁵⁴

As the European population came to numerically dominate the nation, it was the Pākehā media that became the mainstream source of news. The idea that the mainstream media supports the power of the dominant groups in society is a commonly accepted premise amongst media scholars.⁵⁵ In the contemporary context, Ranginui Walker suggests that the press plays a central role in supporting a hierarchy that rests upon Pākehā domination of

⁴⁹ Even in early Māori *niupepa*, the colonial influence was strong. Lachy Paterson explains that many early *niupepa* were controlled by Pākehā and used as ‘propaganda devices [...] to change Māori attitudes and behaviour, socially, politically and culturally, in way which would facilitate Pākehā colonisation.’ See, Lachy Paterson, *Colonial Discourses: Niupepa Māori 1855-1863* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006), 201.

⁵⁰ Philip Whaanga, “Radio: Capable of Carrying a Bicultural Message?,” in *Between the Lines: Racism and the New Zealand Media*, eds. Paul Spoonley and Walter Hirsh (Auckland: Heinemann Reed, 1990), 64.

⁵¹ Whaanga, “Radio,” 64.

⁵² Emiel Martens, *Once Were Warriors: The Aftermath* (Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2007), 86.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Sue Abel, “Māori, Media and Politics,” in *Politics and the Media*, eds. Babak Bahador, Geoff Kemp, Kate McMillan and Chris Rudd (Auckland: Pearson, 2013), 258.

society and sees Māori assume a subordinate position.⁵⁶ Similarly, Philip Whaanga asserts that the mainstream media purports a Pākehā message.⁵⁷ It is suggested that subordination of Māori in the mainstream media is a legacy of colonial domination where, by the end of the nineteenth century, Māori existed only on the margins of the nation.⁵⁸ In a recent study, an examination of news relating to Māori issues revealed that ‘mass news items were persistently structured from within a Pākehā cultural paradigm’ where, for example, phrases like ‘the public’ or ‘taxpayers’ typically referred to New Zealanders as a group that excluded Māori.⁵⁹ Moreover, Sue Abel writes that when Māori do get a voice in the media this is rarely representative of an Indigenous worldview with different priorities to the Western world.⁶⁰

From the 1980s, there was a rise in Māori-dominated alternative media ventures as the renaissance atmosphere prompted a rejection of mainstream avenues founded upon a Pākehā worldview.⁶¹ The turn to alternative media avenues is understandable when it is considered that mainstream representations of Māori consistently undermine Māori issues. A number of commonalities can be identified in scholarly discussion of media depictions of Māori. For example, ‘privilege’ is noted by scholars as a term frequently used in the media to position an argument against Māori.⁶² The term is framed as an inversion of racism whereby Pākehā are the group that are experiencing prejudice. Rankine et al. note that ‘privilege’ and the similar term ‘Māori inheritance’ are frequently used as negative frames in which Māori purportedly receive benefits on the basis of biological, rather than legal, points of difference.⁶³ The emotively-charged catchphrase ‘apartheid’ is also invoked to describe a situation that appears

⁵⁶ Ranginui Walker, “Māori News Is Bad News,” in *What’s News? Reclaiming Journalism in New Zealand*, eds. Judy McGregor and Margie Comrie (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Ltd, 2002), 216-217.

⁵⁷ Whaanga, “Radio,” 59

⁵⁸ Walker, “Māori News,” 215-217.

⁵⁹ Jenny Rankine et al., *Media & Te Tiriti O Waitangi: 2007* (Auckland: Kupu Taea: Media and Te Tiriti Project, 2007), 5.

⁶⁰ Abel, “Māori, Media and Politics,” 262..

⁶¹ Walker, “Māori News is Bad News,” 231.

⁶² Spoonley, “Racism, Race Relations and the Media,” 36; Walker, “Māori News,” 231.

⁶³ Jenny Rankine et al., *Media & Te Tiriti O Waitangi: 2004* (Auckland: Kupu Taea: Media and Te Tiriti Project, 2004), 34.

to privilege Māori and disadvantage Pākehā.⁶⁴ Overall, legitimate claims by Māori are often portrayed as something that takes something away from other New Zealanders rather than being depicted as an opportunity to restore historical wrongdoings.⁶⁵

Another issue identified by scholars is that historical context is conspicuously absent in mainstream news stories involving Māori. Rankine et al. emphasise that acknowledgement of colonisation as a process that had severe consequences on Māori culture and society is virtually non-existent in the mainstream media.⁶⁶ Without such context it is impossible to understand contemporary issues.⁶⁷ Māori issues are also subjugated through the argument that “we are all New Zealanders.” Paul Spoonley suggests that this argument ‘implies a unity where none exists’ and that it is in fact a contemporary avenue of prejudice where Māori are subsumed by the dominant culture.⁶⁸ The argument is most likely to be endorsed by those who believe, whether consciously or not, in a hegemonic New Zealand society which does not account for cultural differences.

On the whole, media scholars and other social commentators conclude that representations of Māori in the mainstream media are overwhelmingly negative and that there is an abundance of negative news stories relating to Māori. A recognisable contemporary example of the continued denigration of Māori in the media is through the constant scrutiny of Māori gangs. While there are only an estimated 2000 Māori gang members, out of a population of 400,000, the persistent reference to this group means the negative impact of Māori gangs is distorted

⁶⁴ Spoonley, “Racism, Race Relations and the Media,” 30.

⁶⁵ Abel, “Māori, Media and Politics,” 261.

⁶⁶ Jenny Rankine et al., *Media & Te Tiriti O Waitangi: 2004*, 35.

⁶⁷ Abel, “Māori, Media and Politics,” 263.

⁶⁸ Spoonley, “Racism, Race Relations and the Media,” 30.

by the media.⁶⁹ Walker suggests that Pākehā gangs such as the Hell's Angels and Highway 61 do not receive nearly as much media attention.⁷⁰

Judy McGregor and Joanna Te Awa refer to Gaye Tuchman's concept of 'symbolic annihilation' to describe news coverage of Māori.⁷¹ They suggest that this denotes the overall underrepresentation and exclusion, stereotypical examination and trivialisation of Māori in the media.⁷² Significantly, such annihilation has severe consequences for race relations, public policy and cultural identity. The media plays a key role in determining public attitudes towards race relations.⁷³ Spoonley goes as far as saying that the media is perhaps the most significant influence on public opinion and notes that: 'The print, audio and audio-visual media determine how we understand other groups in our society, and will reinforce or contradict the view held by one person or another. If the media gets things wrong, they create an impression which is very difficult to counter.'⁷⁴ Spoonley recognises the power that the media holds in influencing public opinion towards race relations.

If the media consistently portrays the viewpoint of the dominant group this is likely to seriously harm minority groups. Abel emphasises that negative representations of Māori in the mainstream media may seriously impact public policy decisions.⁷⁵ A precarious situation emerges when people think they have all the necessary information to form an opinion about Māori if their primary source of information is the monocultural news media.⁷⁶ Finally, when the mainstream media undermines Māori and the Māori worldview there are profound effects on New Zealand's cultural identity. As New Zealand is a nation founded on a bicultural

⁶⁹ Walker, "The Role of the Press," 43.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Judy McGregor and Joanna Te Awa, "Racism and the News Media," in *Nga Patai: Racism and Ethnic Relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, eds. Paul Spoonley, Cluny Macpherson and David Pearson (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Ltd, 1996), 238-239.

⁷² Ibid., 238.

⁷³ McGregor and Te Awa, "Racism and the News Media," 238.

⁷⁴ Spoonley, "Racism, Race Relations and the Media," 31.

⁷⁵ Abel, "Māori, Media and Politics," 258.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 259.

agreement the process of suppressing one partner perpetuates a myth of our heritage and who we are.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Whaanga, "Radio," 64.

Chapter Three

Media Treatment of the Land March

Walker mentions in passing that ‘the Land March [...] [was] characterised by passive resistance, and accordingly, treated in a generally benign way by the news media.’⁷⁸ This assertion will be deconstructed as in-depth examination of the mainstream media surrounding the Land March reveals that the response to the event was nuanced and complex; that it differed between sources; and, in the case of the newspapers, appeared to be influenced by differing editorial stances.

The assertion by media scholars that historical context, particularly the impacts of colonisation, is conspicuously absent in mainstream news stories involving Māori generally held true in the media coverage of the Land March.⁷⁹ The background to the event was rarely mentioned in the newspaper coverage beyond fleeting references embedded in the articles. It could be argued that this is to do with the medium at hand as there is limited space to present ideas in newspaper format and it is contemporary events and developments to current stories that are deemed newsworthy. Moreover, the background may have been explained in greater detail in the media coverage when the March was first proposed. Nevertheless, the absence of such context in the immediate coverage made the event appear to exist in a historical vacuum.

Where the background to the event was explained, this was done by individual reporters rather than coming through in the coverage based on Press Association information.⁸⁰ It thus

⁷⁸ Walker, “The Role of the Press,” 39.

⁷⁹ Jenny Rankine et al., *Media & Te Tiriti O Waitangi: 2004*, 35.

⁸⁰ The New Zealand Press Association (NZPA) operated between 1880 and 2011 as New Zealand’s foremost news agency. For an organisational history of the NZPA up until 1980 see, James Sanders, *Dateline – NZPA: The New Zealand Press Association, 1880-1980* (Auckland: Wilson & Horton Ltd., 1979).

appeared that these reporters were more sympathetic to the issues at hand compared to what was reported through the Press Association. An example of this is an article written by Stephanie Gray who was *The New Zealand Herald's* Land March correspondent.⁸¹ Here it was reported that the marchers were shown the Papakaotai block in the Bay of Plenty which is said to be the first area of Māori land taken after the Treaty of Waitangi. An elder explained that the authorities had forcefully sold the land because the owners could not afford to pay the rates imposed on it.⁸²

The Press also published a noteworthy article that touched on the background to the Land March locating the protest within the international struggle for Indigenous land rights.⁸³ The article explored the case of the Yakima Indians in their fight for land in the United States of America. The article emphasised that the Māori approach was reasonable and just in comparison to the international situation and stated that 'A Yakima Indian would sit and smile, if not laugh aloud, at descriptions of New Zealand's Maori land march on Parliament as a radical move.'⁸⁴ Yet these two examples were exceptional and overall the newspaper coverage failed to acknowledge the impact of the past on the present making it virtually impossible to truly appreciate the issues at hand.

The historical context surrounding the Land March was also conspicuously absent in most of the radio coverage. The major difference here was that Radio New Zealand produced *Te Puna Wai Kōrero*, a radio programme that examined issues of concern for the Māori people.⁸⁵ In this forum, the background to the event was explained. Most strikingly, the *Te Puna Wai Kōrero* episode that aired on 18 September 1975 paid close attention to the history of land loss in New Zealand, thus providing an explanation as to why the Land March was

⁸¹ Stephanie Gray, "Marchers Told of First Land Lost," *The New Zealand Herald*, September 19, 1975, 3.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Stan Darling, "Land March Mirrors Indians' Struggle," *The Press*, October 4, 1975, 21.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ "Maori Tape Collections," Sound Archives New Zealand, accessed August 6, 2014, http://www.soundarchives.co.nz/collections/maori_tape_collections.

needed.⁸⁶ Furthermore, this programme discussed the significance of the land in Māori culture, specifically stressing the difference in cultural understandings of land between Māori and Pākehā. The article was immediately framed within a Māori paradigm as the presenter, Haare Williams, began by recounting the creation story of Ranginui and Papatūānuku.⁸⁷ The article also gave a personal voice to the land struggle as respected members of the Māori community continually emphasised that the land retained a spiritual link to the ancestral past; this included commentary from Ranginui Walker who noted that individual ownership of land in the Māori world is an ‘alien cultural frame of reference.’⁸⁸ While *Te Puna Wai Kōrero* was but one radio programme per week, at least there was a Māori avenue in the national mainstream radio programming.

The television coverage made only brief reference to the historical context of the Land March, however, the *Te Matakite O Aotearoa* documentary paid greater attention to this.⁸⁹ Again, this may reflect the source types at hand and, as previously mentioned, it seems likely that the documentary producers were sympathetic to the marchers’ cause as they had gained the privilege of living in with the group while the March took place.⁹⁰ The background to the event was established through the personal voice accorded to those on the March and those whom the marchers met on the journey. There was, for example, a segment where one of the presenters asked a marcher what the significance of the Auckland Harbour Bridge was to Ngāti Whatua. The man replied that the bridge was built on Ngāti Whatua land, that it was unlikely that this land had ever been compensated for and, that as such Ngāti Whatua would

⁸⁶ “Te Puna Wai Kōrero. 1975-09-18,” *Te Puna Wai Kōrero*, National Radio, New Zealand, 18 September, 1975 (Sounds Archives number: 40402).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ *Te Matakite O Aotearoa*, directed by Geoff Steven, Auckland, New Zealand: Seehear Productions and TV2, 1975.

⁹⁰ “The Land March for TV,” *The Press*, September 24, 1975, 4.

‘come alive’ during the march.⁹¹ Such reference to the ills of colonisation, absent in other media forums, received adequate attention in the *Te Matakite* documentary.

The radio treatment of the Land March, particularly through *Te Puna Wai Kōrero*, engaged with the Māori voice to a greater extent than the newspaper and television coverage. This programme was broadcast nationally in English and provided a rare example of a Māori-centred forum in the mainstream media coverage of the Land March. In the first episode of *Te Puna Wai Kōrero* for 1976, for example, Patrick W. Hohepa examined the most significant events of 1975 for Māoridom.⁹² The Land March was considered to be the most important event of 1975 echoing Haare William’s prediction in an earlier episode that ‘the Māori Land Rights March [...] will be the most moving demonstration of our times.’⁹³ Such a sentiment was not seen in the newspaper coverage, where, without significant opportunity for a Māori voice, the Land March was presented with an air of apathy.

Despite *Te Puna Wai Kōrero* providing a platform for the Māori voice to be heard in the radio coverage of the March, most of the coverage available through the Sound Archives was framed in a Pākehā paradigm with notable trivialisation of the events at hand. For example, in an interview with Hana Jackson, a key member of Ngā Tamatoa, the presenter asked Jackson which aspect of the March had made the biggest impression on her.⁹⁴ Jackson replied that she could ‘feel the spirits of the ancestors’ present with those on the March alluding to the idea that the marchers were supported by those who had passed on.⁹⁵ The presenter responded by requesting further clarification and asked whether the marchers had actually felt a physical

⁹¹ *Te Matakite O Aotearoa*, directed by Geoff Steven, Auckland, New Zealand: Seehear Productions and TV2, 1975.

⁹² “Highlights 1975 Land March,” *Te Puna Wai Kōrero*, National Radio, New Zealand, 14 January, 1976 (Sound Archives number: 47141).

⁹³ “Te Puna Wai Kōrero: 1975-09-18,” *Te Puna Wai Kōrero*, National Radio, New Zealand, 18 September, 1975 (Sound Archives number: 40402).

⁹⁴ “Land March,” Sound Recording, National Radio, New Zealand, 1975 (Sound Archives number: 44471).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

presence of the ancestors.⁹⁶ It seems that this question was asked from within a Pākehā cultural paradigm as it is unlikely that someone knowledgeable in Māoritanga would request further clarification on this point. The presenter proceeded to ask further trivial questions such as what the weather was like on the day that Jackson marched and if she had sore feet.⁹⁷ It could be argued that the media treatment of the Land March in this article was favourable as it did not actively discredit the event. However, it seems that more is revealed by thinking about what was not discussed. The presenter, for example, did not ask Jackson to explain Ngā Tamatoa's position on land rights.

In another archived radio clip, covering preparations to welcome the marchers to Porirua, a presenter briefly spoke to a group of men who were peeling potatoes.⁹⁸ Similar to the Jackson interview, the presenter trivialised the event asking the men, amongst other questions, who organised the food and how they would know if there would be enough for everyone.⁹⁹ Even when the presenter received a nonchalant reply that the men just knew things would work because this was 'the Māori way,' she continued to ask questions such as 'will it [the food] go off.'¹⁰⁰ There was no attempt to ask the men why they had given up their time to spend three days preparing food for the marchers. This article was typical of the English-language radio coverage, outside of *Te Puna Wai Kōrero*, which failed to acknowledge the serious motives of those involved in the Land March. By failing to consider such questions, it appears that the March was not taken seriously by those operating within the Pākehā world.

While the sample of radio coverage available from the Sound Archives was limited, overall the treatment of the Land March is best described as apathetic rather than benign. The trivial questions which characterised much of the interview records revealed a media dialogue that

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Te Roopu Matakite Land March – 1975," Sound Recording, National Radio, New Zealand, 1975 (Sound Archives number 44470).

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

failed to acknowledge the seriousness of the land rights movement. Similarly, the dominant Pākehā discourse overwhelmed the newspaper coverage tending to trivialise the events at hand. An example of this trivialisation appeared in *The Dominion* in which a report on the first two days of the March appeared under the headline ‘*American Aids Land Marchers in Battle of the Blisters.*’¹⁰¹ The article, reporting on the beginnings of a historic event with a solemn purpose, was instead here framed beneath the trivial detail that an American podiatrist had joined the marchers.¹⁰²

An episode of the extended current affairs programme *Seven Days* stood out amidst the media coverage of the Land March as it provided an exceedingly balanced account of the prospective protest.¹⁰³ Importantly, the clip provided reference to differing opinions on the impending Land March within Māoridom and in wider society. The programme began from what seemed to be a pro-Land March stance as the background to the event was established and it was suggested that the March would highlight more than land loss for the Māori community.¹⁰⁴ The presenter also emphasised that land alienation had continued into the contemporary age.

There were, however, alternative opinions voiced. For example, there was a clip of Matiu Rata (the Māori Affairs Minister) who stressed that progress had been made in the months and years preceding 1975.¹⁰⁵ The presenter also asked why Māori were being treated differently from Europeans who were expected to ‘stand tall’ on small sections of urban land.¹⁰⁶ This kind of question represented a thread that played out in the newspaper coverage and correspondence. It illustrates what was a real concern for Pākehā at the time – the idea

¹⁰¹ Judy McGregor, “American Aids Marchers in Battle of Blisters,” *The Dominion*, 15 September, 1975, 1.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ “Maori Land March,” *Seven Days*, Television New Zealand, New Zealand, 14 August, 1975 (Television Archives number: P2219).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

that Māori would impinge on Pākehā freedoms. The Māori viewpoint was accorded a right of reply to this concern when Syd Jackson (activist) explained that the value of land is different in Māoridom where the people feel strength in the land similar to what Pākehā might feel in a Church or under a cenotaph.¹⁰⁷ Other questions were also given a right of reply; this is important because while the Pākehā viewpoint came through, so did the Māori outlook.

Most of the archived television coverage of the March consisted of small and relatively insignificant clips usually comprising visual footage lacking in audio of, for example, scenes of the marchers on their journey. Two episodes of *Tonight at Nine* were the other examples of the most substantial archived television coverage. The first episode aired on 17 September 1975 and covered the beginning stages of the event.¹⁰⁸ This clip provided a rare example of an attempt to explain to a wider audience what the spiritual value of land is to Māori. The presenter suggested that Pākehā land is only really understood in terms of an economic value but as the value of land to Māori represents something metaphysical ‘one can understand the deep pain and grief the Māori people have felt over the centuries as lands have gradually disappeared.’¹⁰⁹ The language choice in the terms ‘pain’ and ‘grief’ was particularly poignant in comparison to other coverage. Notably, direct reference to the concept of *tūrangawaewae* was unusual.¹¹⁰ In other instances where the coverage referred to varying cultural understandings of land this was usually undertaken from a Pākehā position. While an explanation of *tūrangawaewae* was not given at least the concept was allowed to stand organically and therefore was given an air of validity.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Maori Land March,” *Tonight at Nine*, Television New Zealand, New Zealand, 17 September, 1975 (Television Archives number: P4244).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ A common translation of the concept of *tūrangawaewae* is ‘a place to stand.’ This refers to places where the Māori people are empowered and connected. See, Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, “Papatūānuku: The Land – Tūrangawaewae: A Place to Stand,” Te Ara, accessed September 2, 2014, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/papatuanuku-the-land/page-5>.

A second episode of *Tonight at Nine* was broadcast on 13 October 1975 as the marchers left Porirua before beginning the final phase of the March to Parliament grounds.¹¹¹ The presenter began by stating that while the crowds were not as big as had been expected, the passion of the group was still evident as hundreds of people lay on the grass on the marae listening to ‘endless orations.’¹¹² It was the presenter’s tone of voice that was remarkable on this occasion; she stressed the phrase ‘endless orations’ and it was said with a dark quality. This came across rather negatively when it is considered that those listening to the “endless orations” would have been unlikely to see this as a burden. It was also mentioned that the marchers did not appear to be working to a schedule and this was presented as a problem.¹¹³ However, it seems unlikely that the marchers themselves would have been concerned over when they would arrive in Wellington as long as they had gathered and spoken to all those who needed to be met en route.

Overall, the media treatment of the Land March in the archived television footage accorded greater space to the Māori cultural paradigm in comparison to the general newspaper coverage yet there remained substantial evidence of a trivial and apathetic discourse. The above example of *Tonight at Nine* exemplified this.

The *Te Matakite O Aotearoa* documentary provided the most striking example of space allocated to the marchers’ reasoning for undertaking the Land March and presented this view as a legitimate and valid viewpoint.¹¹⁴ This position was established at the beginning of the film when the spiritual significance of land to Māori was discussed. It was explained that whenua means both ‘land’ and ‘placenta’ and that the placenta is dedicated to Papatūānuku

¹¹¹ “1975 Land March,” *Tonight at Nine*, Television New Zealand, New Zealand, 13 October, 1975 (Television Archives number: P4205).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ *Te Matakite O Aotearoa*, directed by Geoff Steven, Auckland, New Zealand: Seehear Productions and TV2, 1975.

when a Māori child is born in order to establish a papa kāinga.¹¹⁵ With this introduction, the film was immediately framed in reference to Māori cultural understandings. Similarly, the significance of the pouwhenua was explained by its creator.¹¹⁶ There were multiple references to the idea that the pouwhenua carried the metaphysical energies of the ancestors.¹¹⁷ This again provided an example of appropriate recognition of Māori culture. The film was also littered with personal testimony from those who had experienced land loss at the hands of the state.¹¹⁸ This gave a personal voice to the origins of the Land March especially as the background context to the event was established and the Māori identity was presented as a legitimate position. Even when the more trivial details of taking part in the March were considered, this was qualified by emphasising that the personal sacrifices made were seen as minor by the marchers who valued participating in what they saw as a crucial affair.

As the film progressed it became clearer that a pro-March position was supported. In a short clip, for example, Cooper was questioned regarding her pronouncement that she would return her government honours if the state did not respond to the marchers' demands.¹¹⁹ She responded that the rewards she received from her people were more important than any governmental award. Arguably, this is a challenge to government authority. However, the fact that Cooper's challenge was included in the documentary, and not contested by the presenters, shows a degree of sympathy to the marchers' cause. This argument is

¹¹⁵ The concept of a papa kāinga is sometimes translated as 'village' however the meaning equates more to the idea of an 'original home' or a 'base.' See, "Papa kāinga," Māori Dictionary, accessed, 28 September 2014, <http://m.maoridictionary.co.nz>.

¹¹⁶ *Te Matakite O Aotearoa*, directed by Geoff Steven, Auckland, New Zealand: Seehear Productions and TV2, 1975.

¹¹⁷ The pouwhenua is a kind of totem pole that it is a traditional mark of territorial mana. The pouwhenua used in the Land March did not touch the ground for the entire journey; this symbolised the extent of land loss in the Māori community. See, Harris, *Hiko*, 72.

¹¹⁸ *Te Matakite O Aotearoa*, directed by Geoff Steven, Auckland, New Zealand: Seehear Productions and TV2, 1975.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

strengthened when it is considered that TV2 contributed financially to the documentary's production.¹²⁰

The film also provided one of the only examples in which the media coverage considered the international context in which the March took place. The Māori struggle was linked to that of Aboriginal Australians and African-Americans who were engaged in similar struggles at the time.¹²¹ It may also be argued that the film was not solely aimed at either Māori or Pākehā. There was sufficient acknowledgement of Māori ways, as well as segments of te reo Māori, that suggest the film was not totally couched in a Pākehā paradigm; yet, enough background detail was established in order to contextualise the event for a Pākehā audience base. Nonetheless, it is interesting that the film did not consider the split in ranks that occurred at the end of the March. The exclusion of the viewpoint of the more radical faction of marchers may indicate that the production company supported a moderate cause of action. An equally valid suggestion, however, is that there may have been a practical reason for ending the documentary at the point where the marchers arrived at Parliament.

As the newspaper coverage of the event provided the greatest source base, this area invites deeper discussion. Firstly, it is important to consider that each newspaper may have been operating under differing editorial policies. In an email interview, Journalist One, however, suggested that newspapers do not really have official editorial policies. Rather, journalists 'make news judgments [...] typically based on deep-seated prejudices that nobody is really aware of even though they practice them daily.'¹²² Similarly, Journalist Two noted that journalists 'become aware of the "climate of practice" in their newsroom by osmosis – feedback both positive and negative; discussions in the cafeteria or the pub after work; [and]

¹²⁰ "The Land March for TV," *The Press*, September 24, 1975, 4.

¹²¹ *Te Matakite O Aotearoa*, directed by Geoff Steven, Auckland, New Zealand: Seehear Productions and TV2, 1975.

¹²² Journalist One, Email interview, September 27, 2014.

the position taken by the newspaper in its editorials.’¹²³ This latter point was also remarked upon by Journalist One who noted that one ‘would judge a paper’s policy by what it published.’¹²⁴ Thus, as noted earlier, the editorial stance of each newspaper may be inferred from the editorials pertaining to the Land March.

In *The Dominion*, three editorials discussed the Land March. The first two offered support for the event and emphasised its importance with the second editorial concluding that the March was ‘only the first step in a better understanding of our society.’¹²⁵ The limits of this support, however, were revealed in the third editorial in which the editor attempted to disassociate the actions of the breakaway group of protestors from those of TRM and argued that the radical demands failed to take into account the complexities, legal and otherwise, of the issues at hand.¹²⁶ The editor noted that ‘the need now is not for continued simplification into slogans, and even demands for further assurances, but for appreciating the issues.’¹²⁷ In this way, the editorial position seemed to be one that supported moderate action as long as this was in line with the rules of those in power. It is reasonable to argue that this is a moderate-conservative response and that this may reflect the historical construction of the newspaper as a conservative voice and the editorial stance of its contemporary form.¹²⁸

A similar editorial position appeared in both *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Times*. The editorial stance of both newspapers became clearer when the protest actions challenged the bounds of democracy. The Land March itself was not condemned in *The New Zealand Herald*.¹²⁹ However, the editor repeatedly noted that action must be undertaken in accordance

¹²³ Journalist Two, Email interview, October 6, 2014.

¹²⁴ Journalist One, Email interview, September 27, 2014.

¹²⁵ Editorial, “Meeting the People,” *The Dominion*, October 10, 1975, 6; Editorial, “Whose Land,” *The Dominion*, October 13, 1975, 6.

¹²⁶ Editorial, “Kinds of Lands in New Zealand,” *The Dominion*, October 15, 1975, 6.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ “The Dominion,” Papers Past, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>.

¹²⁹ Editorial, “Marchers and Tradition,” *The New Zealand Herald*, October 7, 1975, 6; Editorial, “Land Marchers Await Verdict,” *The New Zealand Herald*, October 15, 1975, 6.

with Parliament's rules going as far as asserting that the 'Prime Minister is right to refuse to bow to direct action. To seek to put Parliament under duress is contrary to the very spirit of democracy.'¹³⁰ Like *The Dominion*, the origins of *The New Zealand Herald* as a newspaper established with a 'right-of-centre' angle may have been evident in its contemporary editorial perspective.¹³¹

In *The Times*, an editorial entitled, '*A March with a Difference*,' suggested that the attention brought to the Māori land question would be the greatest impact of the March.¹³² This was not offered as an explicitly supportive statement; however, the piece certainly did not condemn the event. In a later editorial, it was pronounced that that land marchers were 'out of order' in requesting to be heard by the full House at Parliament because that the group had no right to 'special platforms.'¹³³ While *The Times* was free from political affiliations from 1915, it was originally set up as a Liberal publication. Again, it could be said that the editorial stance reflects the historical political position as a Liberal position is one where change is sought through the establishment.

According to a broadcaster with 50 years' experience, who recalled the editorial positions of New Zealand newspapers from the 1960s, it was suggested that 'the further south one went the more conservative the newspapers became.'¹³⁴ This certainly came across in the Land March coverage. At the very least, the editorial stance in *The Press* appeared to be, if not more conservative, clearly advocating the "we are all New Zealanders" argument. The editor's position was divulged when it was argued that in an 'integrated society' everyone ought to share in the task of providing land to be used for 'common ends.'¹³⁵ It was for this reason that the editor suggested that 'the exemption of Maori land from the general law is not

¹³⁰ Editorial, "Harming Their Own Cause," *The New Zealand Herald*, October 16, 1975, 6.

¹³¹ "New Zealand Herald," Papers Past, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>.

¹³² Editorial, "A March with a Difference," *The Times*, September 15, 1975, 4.

¹³³ Editorial, "Out of Order," *The Times*, September 30, 1975, 4.

¹³⁴ Anonymous, email message, September 29, 2014.

¹³⁵ Editorial, "Lessons from the Maori Land March," *The Press*, October, 18, 1975, 14.

easy to sustain.’¹³⁶ It was clear that this so-called “integrated society” did not leave room for Māori values and customs.

In the *Otago Daily Times* a similar position was advocated by the editor. It was argued that a spiritual affinity to the land ‘is not an exclusively Maori phenomenon’ and, that others who had occupied the land in New Zealand for multiple generations had an attachment ‘equal to that of the Maori for his tribal land.’¹³⁷ Furthermore, the editor emphasised that the Government had already worked to restore Māori lands and that compensation for past wrongs had already been paid out.

Overall, it appeared that the editorial position of each newspaper generally worked from within the Pākehā cultural paradigm. Nonetheless, as we will later see, multiple discourses regarding the nature and validity of the Land March did come through in the editorial correspondence. Importantly, the media portrayal of the March in the press was indeed generally benign up until there were incidents where the political establishment was challenged and criticism was stronger. This was evident even before the March itself had officially begun.

A meeting was scheduled to take place on 8 September 1975 between TRM and government representatives to discuss the Māori land question. The newspaper coverage varied in reporting whether this was directly in relation to the forthcoming Land March or not. Regardless of this, the meeting did not take place and this was reported to be because TRM did not turn up.¹³⁸ *The Dominion* coverage reported that Titewhai Harawira, the Wellington

¹³⁶ Ibid.; For further evidence of the editorial position of *The Press*, while not specifically related to the Land March, see also, Editorial, “Maori in Schools,” *The Press*, September 20, 1975, 14. Here the editor argues that “the Education Department should not feel obliged to promote... at the cost of neglecting other responsibilities, the learning of the Maori language.”

¹³⁷ Editorial, “Maori Claims,” *The Otago Daily Times*, October 11, 1975, 4.

¹³⁸ “Land protestors ruffle Rata,” *The Dominion*, September 9, 1975, 9; “Maori group ignores PM,” *The Press*, September 10, 1975, 21.

organiser of the March, had called to cancel the meeting.¹³⁹ However, the Prime Minister's office responded that any official cancellation would have had to have come from Whina Cooper as the President of TRM.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless both sides of the story do not stack up as, on one hand, the secretary of TRM had been reported to say that the group had never heard of any possible meeting with the Government, and on the other, the Prime Minister's office did not deny that the cancellation by Mrs Harawira had not been received.¹⁴¹ *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Times* reported that it was not clear whether a meeting was going to take place at all.¹⁴² There thus appeared to be some confusion in the press as to what had actually occurred regarding the meeting yet the misunderstanding was persistently blamed on TRM. The headlines featured in *The Press* typified this: '*Marchers refuse meeting*' and '*Maori group ignores PM*'.¹⁴³ Regardless of what had occurred, as soon as the elected body were affronted this was immediately condemned.

A similar pattern was evident as the March progressed and further challenges were laid out to the Government. This occurred when TRM condemned the announcement that the marchers would not be met by the full House when they arrived at Parliament and that only a delegation would be granted permission to present the MOR. The coverage was the most explicitly negative when the breakaway group of protestors decided they would camp out in Parliament grounds at the end of the March. The situation was persistently presented as an affront of the status quo. The breakaway group were repeatedly labelled as 'radicals,' 'militants' and 'squatters' despite the fact that it was generally conceded that the group were

¹³⁹ "Marchers get ready," *The Dominion*, September 12, 1975, 9.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² "Protest March To Go Ahead," *The New Zealand Herald*, September 8, 1975, 1; "Protest March Will Go Ahead," *The Times*, September 6, 1975, 2.

¹⁴³ "Marchers refuse meeting," *The Press*, September 8, 1975, 14; "Maori group ignores PM," *The Press*, September 10, 1975, 21.

well-behaved.¹⁴⁴ A cartoon that appeared in *The Press* was particularly telling (see figure one). Here the grotesque representation of a Māori man played on racial stereotypes painting the campout at Parliament grounds as an uncivilised action.

Figure One: Source – H. J. Hilhorst, “The Press,” October 22, 1975, 20.



¹⁴⁴ See for example, “Squatters prepare to sit it out,” *The Dominion*, October 17, 1975, 1; “Maoris Ready for Long Wait,” *The Otago Daily Times*, October 17, 1975, 1; “Maoris might stay months,” *The Press*, October 17, 1975, 1.

The Dominion, *The Press* and *The Otago Daily Times* centred the actions of the breakaway group when reporting on the last official day of the Land March.¹⁴⁵ This was to the detriment of the rest of the day's affairs and, consequently, there was little room available to reflect on the long and arduous journey. By contrast, *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Times* painted the last day as a dignified affair and described the action of the breakaway group as but a 'sour note,' thus not detracting from the message of the March itself.¹⁴⁶ These varying responses, again, appeared to align with the editorial stances. In the case of *The Dominion*, it is reasonable to argue that the actions of the breakaway group were considered less favourably as this newspaper was closest to the seat of government and the continuing protest was likely to be physically visible to the audience.

The representation of the Land March throughout the newspaper coverage also supports the idea that the event was not completely accepted within Māoridom. Tensions surrounding the validity of the March were reported throughout the coverage.¹⁴⁷ A cynical interpretation of this situation might see it as an attempt to isolate the marchers as but a small dissenting faction of Māoridom. *The New Zealand Herald*, for example, emphasised that the marchers were met with mixed responses on different marae: 'there were times when spirits slumped low. At Otiria Marae, none of the elders was there to greet them and there was only one small hall to sleep in.'¹⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the newspaper coverage outside of the more dramatic challenges to the establishment was relatively benign and the March did receive incredible support. It seems more likely that there was genuine variety in opinion as is natural in protest situations. This nuanced reaction remains underexplored in the secondary literature.

¹⁴⁵ "Radicals confront elders," *The Dominion*, October 14, 1975, 1.

¹⁴⁶ "Land March Not in Vain Says PM," *The New Zealand Herald*, October 14, 1975, 1; "Maoris assured total equity," *The Times*, October 14, 1975, 30.

¹⁴⁷ Michael King is one historian who recognised that the Land March was not unanimously welcomed as an acceptable action within Māoridom. See, King, *Whina*, 210.

¹⁴⁸ Stephanie Gray, "Maori Rites," *The New Zealand Herald*, September 24, 1975, 1.

An examination of ‘Letters to the Editor’ over the course of September and October 1975 revealed a variety of opinions amongst the public regarding the value of the Land March. Indeed, while the media treatment of the March might be described as generally benign overall, the letters illustrated the situation was more complex than has previously been recognised. There was substantial evidence of heated discussion against both the actions and purpose of the marchers’ cause.

One of the key opinions presented in the editorial correspondence was the “we are all New Zealanders” refrain. In this thread, correspondents argued that New Zealand was one nation and that Māori were challenging the harmonious race relations that existed between the two peoples.¹⁴⁹ Brendan Hokowhitu and Vijay Devadas argue that ‘the colonial narrative of *‘He iwi ko tahi tātau: Now we are one people’* came to be challenged in the 1970s through Indigenous resistance that was increasingly in the public gaze.¹⁵⁰ It was clear that this “one people” rhetoric was clung to in the Land March correspondence. The notion of one nation was an attempt to cover the reality of a cultural paradigm which did not accommodate Māori values and frameworks. Such an attitude is exemplified in a letter published in *The Dominion* where a correspondent proclaimed that it was time that ‘the Maori learned how to become an integral part of New Zealand’ and questioned when Māori would learn ‘that he gave up his rights to Maoritanga when he mixed his blood with the Pakeha.’¹⁵¹ Similarly, another *Dominion* correspondent said that she was sorry for the actions of her ancestors but that Māori should forgive the past.¹⁵² This correspondent laboured under the pretence that New

¹⁴⁹ For example, see “Exasperated Taxpayer,” letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, September 19, 1975, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Brendan Hokowhitu and Vijay Devadas, introduction to *The Fourth Eye: Māori Media in Aotearoa New Zealand*, by Brendan Hokowhitu and Vijay Devadas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2013), xxiii.

¹⁵¹ B. J. Collins, letter to the editor, *The Dominion*, October 24, 1975, 6.

¹⁵² A. Porteous, letter to the editor, *The Dominion*, October 22, 1975, 6.

Zealand was a ‘multi-racial society that works’ and typified a failure to acknowledge the part that Pākehā may have had in ensuring that relative racial harmony continued.¹⁵³

Another common theme in the editorial correspondence was the assertion that Māori should be grateful for the treatment they had received in New Zealand because they had eaten the previous inhabitants of the nation, the Moriori.¹⁵⁴ This theory was dismantled in revisionist anthropological and historical accounts, some of which were written before the 1970s, yet the myth had endured in the New Zealand consciousness.¹⁵⁵ Walker concludes that:

According to the myth, the Maori, as a superior and more warlike people, expropriated the land from the Moriori. Therefore Pakeha expropriation of the same land on the basis of their superior civilisation was in accordance with the principle of the survival of the fittest. For this reason the false myth of the Moriori has been one of New Zealand's most enduring myths.¹⁵⁶

The myth was frequently drawn upon in the editorial correspondence to justify the behaviour, both past and present, of Pākehā. Two letters in *The Times*, for example, purported respectively that the ‘white civilised man’ and ‘an enlightened people’ had colonised New Zealand and that Māori should be grateful in light of the way the Moriori had been treated.¹⁵⁷ Such rhetoric demonstrated a scapegoat that was used by Pākehā New Zealanders who sought to disassociate themselves from the issues that were raised by the land marchers.

Another strand in the editorial correspondence was the idea that Māori were privileged in their treatment. This assertion was spurred by instances during the Land March where Māori were considered to be advantaged in being granted permission to, for example, walk across

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ “Exasperated taxpayer,” letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, September 19, 1975, 4; “Fair Play,” letter to the editor, *The Otago Daily Times*, September 20, 1975, 4; “Just a Thought,” letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, September 16, 1975, 6; “Observer,” letter to the editor, *The Times*, October 2, 1975, 8; “Pakeha At The Moment,” letter to the editor, *The Times*, September 17, 1975, 4.

¹⁵⁵ James Belich, *Making Peoples* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996); Walker, *Ka Whaiwhai Tonu Matou*, 39-43.

¹⁵⁶ Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whaiwhai Tonu Matou*, 42.

¹⁵⁷ “Observer,” letter to the editor, *The Times*, October 2, 1975, 8; “Pakeha At The Moment,” letter to the editor, *The Times*, September 17, 1975, 4.

the Auckland Harbour Bridge.¹⁵⁸ Correspondents also asserted that Māori were privileged in wider aspects of society especially in regards to the way that the law was applied.¹⁵⁹ One correspondent wrote that ‘the Maori is privileged in law with racial privilege, inherited privilege, and he wants more privilege’ while he, as a Pākehā, was becoming ‘a second class citizen.’¹⁶⁰ As aforementioned, the term ‘privilege’ has been examined by a number of media scholars who suggest that it is used to frame a notion of inverted racism.¹⁶¹

The editorial correspondence also revealed that opinions surrounding the validity of the Land March were not merely divided along a Māori/Pākehā split. The radio, television and wider newspaper coverage of the event tended to depict the March as a strictly race-based issue rarely acknowledging that opinions as to the nature of the event went beyond a racial divide. The contemporary portrayal of the event was far more complex than is recognised in the secondary literature as the event elicited a range of responses from both Māori and Pākehā. Perhaps less unexpected than the Pākehā correspondents who supported the March was the Māori correspondents who asserted that they did not support it. One correspondent in *The Dominion*, for example, noted that while he was a ‘full-blooded Maori’ he saw the land issues as ‘memories of the past.’¹⁶²

Additionally, a particularly lively thread of discussion emerged in the *New Zealand Herald*. This started with “I am a True Maori” who began by stating: ‘I am an old Maori and very disappointed in all this strife between European and Maori. Up to 15 years ago we lived happily but now we have all these stirrers.’¹⁶³ This opinion was endorsed by three subsequent

¹⁵⁸ “Just a Pakeha,” letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, October 18, 1975, 6.

¹⁵⁹ L. A. Taylor, letter to the editor, *The Dominion*, October 16, 1975, 6.

¹⁶⁰ B. L. Hayman, letter to the editor, *The Dominion*, October 24, 1975, 6.

¹⁶¹ Spoonley, “Racism, Race Relations and the Media,” 36; Walker, “Māori News,” 231.

¹⁶² B. J. Collins, letter to the editor, *The Dominion*, October 24, 1975, 6.

¹⁶³ “I am a True Maori,” letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, September 19, 1975, 4.

correspondents, at least one of whom was Māori.¹⁶⁴ The correspondents emphasised that the dissent reflected a minority opinion and asserted that amicable race relations were being disrupted by the so-called stirrers. Again to take a cynical view, it appeared that the dissenting Māori voice was appropriated by the correspondent who identified as Pākehā.¹⁶⁵ Nonetheless, a further correspondent replied in *The New Zealand Herald* correspondence noting that “I am a True Maori” may have served to emphasise the idea that everything was fine despite the fact that a substantial group of Māori, young and old, had joined together to bring legitimate grievances to the public’s attention.¹⁶⁶

The editorial correspondence, overall, gave due attention to a positive pro-Land March opinion and accorded room to dissenting views against those couched in a Pākehā cultural paradigm.¹⁶⁷ A further example of this can be seen in the *Otago Daily Times* correspondence. Out of the five letters published in the editorial correspondence, three were written in response to “Fair Play.”¹⁶⁸ This particular correspondent asserted that it was Pākehā who had convinced Māori that they had been mistreated and emphasised that that he or she knew of Māori land in the North Island that went to ruins when returned to its Māori owners.¹⁶⁹ The first response to this letter condemned “Fair Play’s” suggestion that it was Pākehā who had convinced Māori to fight back because it was members of the Māori community who had

¹⁶⁴ “A Maori Elder,” letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, September 27, 1975, 6; “Ex-WAAF,” letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, September 24, 1975, 6; “M. M. B.,” letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, September 23, 1975, 6.

¹⁶⁵ “Ex-WAAF,” letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, September 24, 1975, 6.

¹⁶⁶ W. J. Tupeke, letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, October 9, 1975, 6.

¹⁶⁷ See for example, Lawrence Collins, letter to the editor, *The Dominion*, October 20, 1975, 6; Bonnie Cruickshank, letter to the editor, *The Dominion*, October 1, 1975, 6; “Facts are Facts,” letter to the editor, *New Zealand Herald*, October 23, 1975, 6; N. A. Hautai, letter to the editor, *The Times*, October 21, 1975, 4; C. W. Hohaia, letter to the editor, *The Dominion*, October 8, 1975, 8; Ivin Kirpatea, letter to the editor, *The Dominion*, October 24, 1975, 6; E. McIntosh, letter to the editor, *The Times*, October 7, 1975, 22; S. Phillips, letter to the editor, *The Dominion*, October 13, 1975, 6.

¹⁶⁸ “Fair Play,” letter to the editor, *The Otago Daily Times*, September 20, 1975, 4; I. Te Arai Jones, letter to the editor, *The Otago Daily Times*, September 26, 1975, 7; Ray Pratt, letter to the editor, *The Otago Daily Times*, September 26, 1975, 7; M. A. Tairi, letter to the editor, *The Otago Daily Times*, September 26, 1975, 7.

¹⁶⁹ “Fair Play,” letter to the editor, *The Otago Daily Times*, September 20, 1975, 4.

organised the Land March.¹⁷⁰ It was also noted that it was unjust to invoke a stereotype that Māori cannot care for their lands.¹⁷¹ Following a similar line of argument, Ray Pratt responded to “Fair Play” saying that ‘too often we Maoris, in the eyes of the pakeha are not living right because we are not conforming fully to European ways [...] racial harmony and understanding will never come about while Europeans continue to force their ideas and ways [...] on to the Maori without also sacrificing a part of pakeha culture too.’¹⁷² This correspondence exemplified the conflicting views surrounding issues that were brought up by the Land March. It would be incorrect to argue that the primary representation of the event existed monolithically in a conservative Pākehā paradigm as, particularly through editorial correspondence, alternative views emerged.

¹⁷⁰ M. A. Tairi, letter to the editor, *The Otago Daily Times*, September 26, 1975, 7.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ray Pratt, letter to the editor, *The Otago Daily Times*, September 26, 1975, 7.

Conclusion

The 1975 Māori Land March represented a moment of change in New Zealand's race relations. The event demonstrated that the issue of land loss, a contemporary and ongoing legacy of colonisation, was but one grievance that needed to be addressed. The examination of the media coverage surrounding the Land March reveals the extent to which the media supported a challenge to the status quo and the tensions that existed both between and amongst Māori and Pākehā over the nature and validity of the event.

A discourse of apathy characterised the media coverage. Even when the event was not actively discredited, the general absence of background context made the protest appear to exist in a historical vacuum. Without such background detail, the media often focused on trivial aspects in the reporting and produced a discourse that lacked serious acknowledgement of the events at hand. Those items that did consider the background to the event were those in which the Māori voice was included to a greater extent.

Overall, it is fair to say that the media treatment of the Land March was “generally benign” even if this was shrouded with a haze of apathy. Reflecting on the March as a crossroads of New Zealand society, those with the lens of hindsight might conclude that this benign yet apathetic treatment masked a sense of uncertainty regarding how the nation was to move forth into a postcolonial identity. Moreover, the newspaper coverage clearly signalled how far the benign treatment extended. It appeared that the March was supported only to the extent that the protest manifested as a moderate-liberal approach to change. However, as soon as the seat of power was affronted, the protest action was constructed as radical and undignified. The tone, language and framing of the articles that related to the missed meeting between

TRM and government representatives; the announcement that TRM did not want only a delegation to present the MOR; and, most poignantly, the actions of the breakaway group, prompted more instances of openly negative portrayals. This was true of all the newspapers, even if the editorial stance affected the extent to which this was the case. The archived coverage of the event from both the Sound Archives and Television New Zealand did not include items related to the actions of the splinter group. This in itself may be telling. Perhaps this latter development was not considered important enough, or even not valid enough, to be archived.

The editorial correspondence in the various newspapers illustrated the scope of opinion that existed surrounding the Land March. While this should not be considered as a definitive window on the kinds of viewpoints that existed, the correspondence was published and thus provided an avenue of representation in the media. The thread of correspondence that argued for a “one-New Zealand” monocultural society represented the idea that the increasingly assertive Māori voice was to be the detriment of Pākehā “rights” and identity. Nonetheless, the various letters revealed that opinions were not simply split along a Māori-Pākehā divide. The response was nuanced and this has not been sufficiently acknowledged in the secondary literature. This is a potential area of future research especially when it is considered that the Land March was but the start of the land rights movement, and wider Māori Renaissance, that arguably continues today.

Overall, the media representation of the Māori Land March reveals a sense that race relations in New Zealand were changing. While the March was generally portrayed as an acceptable challenge to the status quo, the mainstream media framed the event within a discourse that clearly established the extent to which such a challenge was considered valid and which often failed to account for the serious nature of the situation. The Land March foreshadowed a cultural shift in New Zealand society where the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi would

eventually play a greater role in nursing the nation's bicultural obligations. The media coverage of the Land March illustrated that there was opposition to this impending change just as the role of the Treaty, in its modern form as a living document, remains a contemporary source of tension.

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