

Correspondence

Dear Editors

UPON RE-READING my review of Harry Evison's *Te Wai Pounamu* (*New Zealand Journal of History*, April 1994, p.104) I can see how he read into it (*New Zealand Journal of History*, October 1994, p.239) the view that his book consisted of material submitted to the Waitangi Tribunal. He is at pains to refute this as a means of destroying the basis of my comments.

However, I did not make the direct statement attributed to me nor did I intentionally imply it. I was not thinking about whether or not he had rehashed old material. It was not a point I thought important. It has no bearing on the real point of the review which was to question whether a general history of Maori should focus so much on the type of grievances which are rightly the concern of the Waitangi Tribunal. This is an important problem which also concerns all who teach or write about New Zealand history involving Maori.

It is worth quoting Mr Evison's description of his book: 'it is about European colonialism and its impact on the southern Maori. The earlier chapters portray Maori tribal society, colonialist movements, traders, musket wars, epidemics, British and Australian politics, missionaries, and their accompanying ideologies. Later chapters include the pastoral economy, Victorian imperialism, Darwinism and racism, New Zealand historiography and the "culture clash" theory.'

This is a very specific and sometimes negative list. Maori society is only referred to in relation to earlier chapters; thereafter the emphasis is on what is occurring among the colonial power. 'Musket wars' implies European responsibility; health issues are seen as 'epidemics'; Darwinism is coupled with racism. Although the word 'ideology' is correctly used, it is a word which today has negative connotations.

The reader should also ask what is *not* covered in this list. The sub-title of Evison's book is 'A History of the Southern Maori during the European Colonization of New Zealand'. But if one was asked to entitle his summary, it would not be 'A History of the Southern Maori', it would be 'Facets of Colonial Culture affecting Southern Maori'. His list reflects a view of Maori history in which all the significant influence comes from without and Maori simply respond, bearing no blame and gaining no credit for their destiny.

This is not, for example, a study of the Southern Maori response as they move from centuries of isolation to having a potential access to all the cultures of the world (a process which is wider and more constructive than 'colonialism'); nor is it a study of the Maori contribution to New Zealand development since 1769. It is legitimate for Mr Evison to write a book describing, as he sees it, the colonial culture affecting Maori but if so, the sub-title should reflect this.

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