

Performing ‘New Zealand’

MAORI AND PAKEHA DELEGATES AT THE PAN-PACIFIC WOMEN’S CONFERENCE, HAWAII, 1934*



THE NEW ZEALAND DELEGATION to the 1934 conference of the Pan-Pacific Women’s Association (PPWA), held in Honolulu, was celebrated as an example to the world. Comprised of Pakeha and Maori members, the team embodied the kind of co-operative race relations promoted by women’s internationalism. Its bi-racial and bi-lingual presentations to the conference spoke of inter-racial harmony not only within the team but also within New Zealand, an idea heartily welcomed by its internationalist audience. If New Zealand could forge co-operation between white and black, then so could the world. In an interview recorded on her return to New Zealand following the conference, the leader of the delegation, Elsie Andrews, confirmed that it had been ‘a surprise and a pleasure for other delegations to know that the Maori and white race were working together. . . in such perfect harmony’.¹

Claims of inter-racial harmony were not new in New Zealand in 1934, particularly as a number of Maori were appointed to key policy, church and social reform positions during the interwar years. According to James Bennett, however, those few individuals were mostly members of a Maori élite and were valorized as ‘honorary whites’.² Several among this élite, including Frederick Augustus Bennett — appointed in 1928 as the first Maori Bishop — emerged as social, cultural and religious leaders with significant political influence in Pakeha as well as Maori communities.³ Of particular interest to this article, élite Maori women also claimed membership in the ‘white tribe’. Bishop Bennett’s sister-in-law, Victoria Te Amohau Bennett, already a key figure in the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), became the most influential of the two Maori women included in the 1934 New Zealand delegation to the PPWA conference. She and her Maori co-delegate moved confidently among women of the PPWA. Both wielded enormous power as cultural translators and as high-ranking intermediaries, and were key figures in consolidating the status of the Pakeha delegates as uniquely sensitive to race issues.

As became increasingly clear during the conference, the Maori delegates understood themselves as first and foremost part of the larger Polynesian Pacific community. This community existed beyond the parameters of the ‘inter-racial harmony’ or ‘friendship’ imagined by internationalist women.⁴ In Honolulu, the Maori delegates were feted by Hawaiian royalty, enjoying considerable status as élite indigenous women of the Polynesian Pacific. Their status within the wider Pacific community seemingly contradicted delegation leader Elsie Andrews’ self-appointed role as facilitator of their entry into the world community of women. Internationalism was important to Maori women. Their collaborations with the PPWA, beginning in 1934 and extending into the 1950s, clearly expressed an

interest in the potential of women's internationalism in the Pacific region to promote their concerns regionally and globally.⁵

In the following discussion, however, I am interested less in James Bennett's notion of honorary whiteness than in the desire of Pakeha to achieve honorary brownness. During the voyage to Honolulu and her time at the conference, Elsie Andrews was at great pains to achieve a 'friendship' with Victoria Bennett in particular. The dissonance between the bi-racial performances of their delegation and the reality of less than ideal race relations in New Zealand saw Andrews seeking to constitute herself as a well-meaning settler colonial, an 'honourable' status earned, in her own mind at least, through her relationship with the Maori delegates.

While it is important not to underestimate the significance of the participation of Maori delegates in 1934, in the longer view their remarkable presence tells us less about the achievement of inter-racial harmony than it does about the legacy of whiteness within the PPWA. Dominated by white women leaders in the interwar years, the PPWA asserted the importance of 'civilized' women — including women from Japan and China — in bringing about progress in the region. This distinction between 'civilized' and less advanced women had historically dominated women's internationalism. Women of 'advanced' countries such as New Zealand assumed that it was their duty to uplift indigenous women. Such women were not expected to represent themselves.⁶ Thus Native American women were not among North American delegations to conferences, and Australian delegates, while ready to raise the question of indigenous rights at the 1930 conference,⁷ never considered actually including Aboriginal women among their ranks. One indigenous Hawai'i woman became a long-time member of the Hawai'i PPWA delegation after World War II. Most Polynesian women living in the Pacific were represented by national delegations of women from Pacific Rim imperial and settler colonial powers.⁸ Moreover, where indigenous people were present during early conferences, they most often provided the entertainment and wore 'traditional' dress at conference events. It was into this contradictory context of 'cross-cultural exchange' and 'inter-racial harmony' that the bi-racial New Zealand delegation made its notable entrance.

The first Pan-Pacific Women's Conference (PPWC) was organized under the auspices of the Pan-Pacific Union in 1928. According to its official history, it was held at the suggestion of New Zealander Mark Cohen (the MP for Dunedin), a Pan-Pacific Union participant. Cohen argued that a women-only group would facilitate the dissemination of information on maternal and infant health to Pacific Island women. Such information would preserve and improve races considered severely impacted by 'culture clash'. The second conference, held in 1930, saw the formation of the PPWA. The broadening of its initial maternalist focus towards a social reform and pacifist agenda more truly reflected the middle-class and professional interests of its members drawn largely from Pacific Rim countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Japan, China and Canada.

The guiding philosophy of the PPWA was the promotion of cultural internationalism, in particular friendship and co-operation between women of

'East' and 'West'. Friendly co-operation was to foster humane development in the region, particularly in the protection of women and children. It was also believed that exchanges between women would help safeguard peace. Study that [if] any more such entertainments are planned I'm going to absent myself'.²⁰

Interactions with Japanese women seem to have been more amicable, but as with the Chinese delegates Andrews failed to name them individually, despite both the Chinese and Japanese delegates taking leading roles in early conference debates and later in the association's hierarchy.²¹ In a typically dismissive manner, mixed with barely suppressed anxiety, she reduced cultural exchange to a poor joke about bodily functions: 'Sneezes are international you will be glad to hear. We can't remember the Japanese names and their English is not always easy to follow, but one sneezed yesterday morning and I understood her instantly.'²² Indeed cultural exchange was reduced in her account to a 'foods from many lands' approach. By the end of the conference Andrews concluded that: 'It seems odd to do and see and eat more different things in three weeks than in one's previous forty-one years. But still I am a wild cat walking on its wild lone and preferring New Zealand above everything and longing for home'.²³

Whiteness and speaking English as a first language were not in themselves sufficient to make Andrews feel at home, however. She was offended by what she considered were the grating accents of the Americans and the Australians. Not only were Pakeha her kith and kin, their voices were delightful to the ear. In the main, Andrews preferred to make her networks within a small coterie, most of whom were New Zealanders. 'So perhaps even if I am not good at international friendships', she confessed with mock admonition, 'I can congratulate myself on some new ones among my own people'.²⁴ One of the exceptions to this rule was her alliance with the leader of the US delegation, Dr Hildegard Kneeland, with whom she wrote a streamlined structure and focus for the PPWA on the last night of the 1930 conference.

Her friendships with New Zealanders (eventually to include Victoria Bennett) were cemented — at least according to Andrews — by mutual admiration. Of these, a smaller group was further consolidated through the revelation of her long-term relationship with her ex-assistant teacher, Muriel Kirton. Kirton accompanied Andrews on the 1930 trip and it was to Kirton and a series of close women friends that the top copies from Andrews' diary were regularly sent back to New Zealand. Leila Rupp, a historian of women's internationalism, has shown that same sex partnerships were a significant aspect of international women's networks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁵ As Alison Laurie has argued, Andrews' relationship with Kirton may be located within this larger historical context.²⁶

One of the few delegates Andrews invited to read her revealing letter-book diary was Mary Eleanor Sims (Bennett was another). A graduate of the University of Otago and first assistant teacher at Christchurch Girls' High School, Sims was past president of the Canterbury Association of University Women, Dominion president of the New Zealand Federation of University Women and its representative at the NCW, Christchurch. She was also, wrote Andrews, one of the 'striking types here of diversely attractive women'.²⁷ By the end of the 1934 conference Andrews exclaimed: '[she] has just walked straight into my

heart and taken up a greater space there than I imagined was "For Rent" at this stage of my life.' And, she added ruefully, 'she has sadly cramped my style'.²⁸

Andrews' diaries also described conference erotics in which physical and intellectual attraction played their role in alliances between women more generally. She often noted the attractiveness or otherwise of delegates, several of whom she described as 'goddesses' for the benefit of her readers at home. Her attention to slimness, height and sleekness of attire suggests her own self-consciousness about being short and, in terms of the criteria she applied to others, not particularly attractive. The attention she and others paid to who wore what at social functions, who graced whose table at dinner and who kissed who on the lips in greeting, points to a sexually charged conference power dynamic.

If being a woman internationalist was about being sexy, sophisticated and well dressed, this usually meant also being white, educated and middle class. Andrews, who fulfilled the two former criteria but not the latter, recorded that off-the-shoulder evening dress, round horn-rimmed glasses and red lipstick were the fashion for women internationalists in 1930. Conference photographs bear this out, but they show that such signifiers were also mobilized by Japanese and other non-Western delegates. In 1934 the Maori delegates were extremely successful players as sexy, politically active women. They proved to be extremely desirable figures in the highly charged atmosphere of international, inter-racial friendship while also being fashionable and stylish modern women among similarly modern peers. Victoria Bennett's backless, black lace dress, worn on the final evening of the conference, attracted particular comment. Like other non-western delegates, Maori women chose when and where to appear in 'traditional' dress and when to surprise and intrigue the white women with their formal, Western, evening attire.

The idea of Maori women joining the New Zealand delegation seems to have occurred to Andrews as a result of her questioning her relationship to the British Empire during the 1930 PPWC. While attending the cinema one evening, after



Figure 1: Elsie Andrews in typical conference attire. New Zealand Freelance Collection. Courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library.

a day of conference-going, she had a cross-cultural experience, not between ‘East’ and ‘West’, or black and white, but concerning variations of whiteness and imperialism. In Hawai’i, a North American colony, she was the only one to stand when ‘God Save the King’ was played at the start of a British movie. ‘It had not struck me before that anywhere in the world “God Save the King” would not bring people to their feet,’ she remarked in surprise. ‘I suppose [sic] it is the same kind of superiority complex which makes us somehow always visualise God as a white man who speaks English.’²⁹ Such incipient anti-imperialism suggested the need for greater self-reflection concerning settler colonialism in New Zealand. She wrote: ‘We British people seem to have a special devil that needs to be exorcised — the devil which leads to a feeling of superiority and arrogance’.³⁰

In a classic colonialist move, Andrews sought to distinguish herself from other Anglo delegates through her relationship to things ‘Maori’. Maori culture was the New Zealand she missed while overseas. Performances by Hawai’ian musical groups reminded her of Maori songs and the famous Bishop Museum’s display of a Maori carving was one ‘over which’, she wrote, ‘I hung lovingly’.³¹ When conference delegates were taken to visit the home of ‘David’, who sang a welcome and then pounded taro, she was reminded of a Maori equivalent.³² For the Maori delegates, these same moments likely held other significance. We can imagine the shock, perhaps mixed with sorrow or excitement, at seeing an important carving removed from its own people. And we might wonder at their recognition that Hawai’ian culture, even as promoted to tourists, was capable of providing a vibrant source for cultural survival as well.

In her 1930 diary, Andrews recorded only one discussion concerning race relations. On the way to Honolulu she met Constance Ternent Cooke, a member of the Australian delegation. Cooke, Andrews noted, ‘is very interested in all matters concerning native races’.³³ Cooke had spoken on the subject at the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines’ Protection Society in London in 1927, as well as at British Commonwealth League conferences, and had recently been appointed by the South Australian government to the Advisory Board on the Aborigines in Adelaide.³⁴ For her participation at the PPWC she had prepared a scathing report on government policy and Aboriginal conditions in Australia. The Federal government responded quickly with a denial of her allegations. Her report and the government’s response were both published later in the official conference report.³⁵ Cooke and Andrews talked ‘up on deck’ one evening, Andrews reported, ‘about Australian [A]borigines and [M]aoris. She has made a study of all questions concerning the Australian blacks and is keenly interested in hearing of other native races.’³⁶

How Andrews described Maori conditions to Cooke can only be guessed at, but she later questioned her own attitude on the subject. In a newspaper interview she gave on her return she declared her rejection of: ‘the absolute pettiness of racial antipathy’. Andrews mobilized the trope of women’s shared experience — the ultimate foundation for women’s internationalism — as the source of her revelation concerning the superficiality of racial differences, and of the racism they engendered. The report continued: ‘Before she left New Zealand she knew she had that failing and for that reason she had not wanted

to go. At the Conference she had felt part of the world's great sisterhood of woman. There are differences between us of course, but how superficial they seemed.'³⁷ Three years later, in a report to the New Plymouth Peace Council, she admitted that: 'I had always felt a stupid and unworthy shrinking from other races especially when they were of another colour. The conference made me realise once and for all the extreme pettiness of any such feeling.'³⁸ When asked to lead the 1934 delegation, Andrews had already decided that Maori women would be included.

According to the *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, reporting in early 1934 on the forthcoming PPWC, the New Zealand delegation was to include three Maori women selected for their capacity to demonstrate aspects of Maori cultural life. Readers were informed that 'Noted Maoris Will Come to Session Here — Arts of New Zealand Aborigines will be shown at the Pan-Pacific Conference'. Mrs Haria Te Mauharanui Colwill, 'the daughter of one of New Zealand's early settlers, the late Hon. William Swanson', would attend, along with 'a chiefess of the Ngati-Kahunguni tribe'. Also expected were 'Princess Te Puea Herangi, a Maori chiefess and Miss Paiki, a young Maori girl who has a thorough knowledge of Maori mythology, Pa, communal life, and native singing and dancing'.³⁹ (Te Puea would become the patroness of the Maori Women's Welfare League formed in the early 1950s.)⁴⁰ Two months later the newspaper reminded Hawai'ians that, of all the delegates arriving for the conference, '[p]robably the most colorful and interesting . . . will be that of New Zealand with three Maori women, direct representatives of their race, all of high birth, and excellently qualified to take part in the programme. They will bring with them exhibits of Maori handicraft including weaving, which will be demonstrated by one of the women'.⁴¹

Instead of these community leaders and cultural experts, however, two women who were already established within white women's feminist networks joined the delegation, Mrs H.D. Bennett and Mrs Jean Hammond.⁴² Their membership of an international delegation signaled a new opportunity for the promotion of their own careers and of Maori women's concerns more generally, as well as their capacity to influence the direction of women's internationalism.

Victoria Te Amohau Bennett was a member of an important Maori family. She had been educated privately at Queen Victoria School for Maori girls, one of the exclusive boarding schools for the daughters of wealthy Maori expected to make propitious marriage-alliances between élite families. Bennett had hoped



Figure 2: Victoria Bennett in the YWCA. *The New Zealand Girl*, Vol.1, No.2, 1 February 1936, p.2. Courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library.

to have a career as well. She told Andrews that unfair expulsion from the school had curtailed her ambition to become a nurse.⁴³ She may have planned to join the emerging group of Maori women health workers who would constitute the basis of the Maori Women's Welfare League in the early 1950s, and who were to be in the forefront of lobbying governments for improved conditions for Maori. Instead, by the early 1930s, a mother of three and in her early forties, she had become a leader within the New Zealand YWCA. In 1936, as the acting president of the YWCA, she welcomed Georgina Sweet, the PPWA's president, who was touring New Zealand.⁴⁴ That same year a letter Bennett wrote appeared in one of the very first issues of YWCA's journal *The New Zealand Girl*. In it she emphasized the Christian ideals of service and of standing 'united and unafraid'.⁴⁵

Less information appears in the records about Mrs Hammond. Andrews wrote in her diary that she 'looks twenty turns out to be thirty-eight and has a daughter of nineteen, also a son at Nelson College, and two younger girls'.⁴⁶ She noted that Hammond was working on birth control material for the conference.⁴⁷ Hammond does not feature in Andrews' diaries, nor in PPWA reports of the conference. Only Bennett, who was awarded honorary life membership in the organization in 1960, is remembered in the official history of the New Zealand PPWA.⁴⁸

In Andrews' diary record, Bennett enjoys a position of considerable power among the New Zealand delegates. Andrews was ambivalent about Bennett's position, unsure how such a civilized woman could enact what to Andrews was uncivilized, traditional behaviour. According to Andrews, as they sailed from Suva to Hawai'i (with, she asserted, nothing but flying fish to distract them), the New Zealand delegates: 'practiced their native music. Mrs Bennett appears able to take any part, high or low, without the slightest trouble, and the rest simply do as she tells them. We shall be fluent Maori scholars when we come home. Songs and speeches, chants and incantations and war-calls will roll from our lips as fluently as blasphemy.'⁴⁹

Given Andrews' sardonic humour, the blasphemy she refers to may be that the aggressive tone chanting required brought to her mind the act of swearing. But the allusion had more sinister implications, linking indigenous language and culture to the blasphemous and heathen. She and her Pakeha co-delegates were in this sense descending into the world of the black arts. Nor could she and the others find the body-mind synergy required by Bennett. Merely going through the motions proved a faint substitute for embodied cultural knowledge: 'We practised our chant with appropriate gestures. Although Mrs Bennett despairs of us ever acquiring the correct vim.'⁵⁰ The fierce expressions and (in their terms) sexualized movements were clearly causing difficulty for them all. With her rather hopeless pupils gathered around her, Hammond demonstrated 'a most realistic haka like a hula dance and insisted on us endeavouring to imitate her'. Andrews invited laughter at her ineptitude, but not too much — after a few half-hearted attempts, she refused to take any further part in singing or learning the haka,⁵¹ noting 'failed miserably'.⁵² Just as Maori chants seemed like blasphemy in Pakeha mouths, so their dancing reduced haka to burlesque: 'Mrs Bennett thinks we can learn to twist and wriggle as Maoris do, but I am convinced that we can't. When she and Mrs Hammond dance all their movements are sheer

poetry and beautiful to watch, but the others with the best will in the world, are only a burlesque.'⁵³

Confiding her inadequacies to Bennett led to the beginning of the friendship between the two women. Andrews learned something of Bennett's 'purple past', at this point '[w]ithout giving away my own,' she wrote. Part of this purple past, in Andrews' eyes, was Bennett's mixed descent. 'She is a 3-quarter caste', she noted. Later they shared the Maori stories that Pakeha as well as Maori learned in school and Mrs Bennett told how she got her nickname 'Wikitoria Te Amohau'. Then they talked about 'the entire philosophy of life!'⁵⁴ This exchange, tantalizingly left out of her record, culminated in Bennett inviting Andrews to a hui where everyone slept together. This was Bennett's gesture of welcoming Andrews into her extended community, but ever inclined to find the salacious for her diary reader, Andrews focused instead on the idea of spending the night with such an attractive woman. She exclaimed: 'Now am I awake or dreaming? I told her my reputation would be gone for ever!!'⁵⁵

A far more urgent task occupied Andrews over the next few days, however — trying to learn by heart the Maori speech she had decided to give as part of the New Zealand conference presentation. Official accounts leave out the process Andrews and Bennett shared in preparing their presentation. Given their speech was heralded as an example of cultural exchange, it is ironic that Andrews knew very little Maori and was forced to learn the whole thing by rote: 'It is going to be a terrible task because it conveys nothing whatever to me'. 'Woe is me that ever my brain conceived the notion of demonstrating the friendliness of our two races.' Although (according to Andrews) she had conceived of the idea herself, it could only be made possible through the hard work of her coaches, Bennett and Hammond. The process of learning the speech reversed the conference assumption that Pakeha were leading Maori into the international fold. It was both a sign of the power indigenous women held in relation to the cultural internationalism celebrated by the conference and, at the same time, seeming evidence of Andrews' special relationship with them. Andrews wrote: 'I know I should be learning some more Maori. Mrs Bennett and Mrs Hammond are so delighted with the idea of me giving New Zealand's greeting in Maori that I feel I must do it even if the effort bursts a bloodvessel.' Bennett was to give the same speech in translation but, in contrast with Andrews, her 'command of English is really remarkable'.⁵⁶ Although admiring of Bennett, Andrews betrayed a desire to minimize her education, her high rank and her sophistication by implying that her competency in English was unexpected.

What Andrews was less aware of was the larger politics of language and identity into which she was being recruited. Oratory — korero — represented political power. Keeping language alive was central to cultural survival, especially where schools banned indigenous speech. Moreover, Maori communities were necessarily bi-lingual and speeches were often presented in English and then in Maori.⁵⁷ Following the same pattern, but with a Pakeha woman presenting the Maori version, represented quite a coup for the Maori delegates, one that was undoubtedly appreciated by Hawai'ians in the conference audience.

From the outset, the Maori delegates attracted enormous attention as charming women in their own right. They were popular figures on board ship. One evening,

according to Andrews, Bennett and Hammond were invited to stay for supper with the captain, having made a ‘hit with their infectious laughter’. To Andrews’ amusement, Bennett, who was a ‘pillar of the YWCA’, then found herself involved in a post-dinner game of casino.⁵⁷ But it was on arrival in Honolulu that the significance of the Maori presence really began to dawn on the Pakeha members of the delegation.

As the ship docked, the New Zealand delegation had a chance to show off the bi-culturalism they had rehearsed en route. The *Honolulu Star Bulletin* reported, ‘[W]hen the Royal Hawai’ian band finished playing at the docking of their ship, the . . . [New Zealand delegation] responded from the deck with a Maori song of greeting’.⁵⁹ This band was important to native Hawai’ians, having played at state occasions for Hawai’i’s royal family ruling the country before its ‘annexation’.⁶⁰ Following the death of Queen Emma, Hawai’i’s royal line continued in symbolic form only. The band still played, but Hawai’i was now a colony, and Hawai’ians had been subjected to colonialism just as their Maori visitors had. It seemed in this moment that an exchange occurred based not on the conference ideals of inter-racial exchange but rather celebrating a moment of mutual recognition between two ‘colonized’ peoples.

Andrews’ diary account provides a further twist to this arrival tale, for it was Bennett’s Pakeha choir that sang the Maori rejoinder, not the Maori delegates. Andrews wrote that Bennett commanded ‘Sing’ and they had all replied ‘like obedient school children, with “Hoki hoki tonu mai”. It sounded beautiful to me and the band applauded to a man.’ Having disembarked, they sang their song again due to popular demand, and Andrews ‘(. . . pretended to, myself, as well, — just to be in the picture)’.⁶¹ Through the Hawai’ian press ‘Mrs H.D. Bennett’ (her husband’s initials were used in PPWA official documents) became publicly known as Mrs Victoria Te Amohau Bennett, her first name and her Maori name a double revelation. It was within the Pacific ‘melting pot’ of Hawai’i that she and Hammond were celebrated as ‘the first of their race to ever attend an international women’s conference’. Welcomed as ‘First Maoris for Women’s Studies Here’, these ‘two native women’ brought with them examples of Maori children’s school work as well as their own ‘native’ authority on ‘Maori lore and customs’.⁶²

In an interview featured alongside their photographs several days later, Bennett made it clear that she had something to contribute besides traditional custom. She was, she asserted, a woman of the modern world. Explaining why she and Hammond were ‘first’ among Maori, she pointed to changes within her own community. Like other modern women, she asserted, Maori women were ‘awakening’ to the ‘international family’ without ‘creeds, of no color or race’. Turning the idea of tradition on its head, she called for whites to act upon their duty to promote the rights of indigenous peoples within the international family. She concluded: ‘All around us there comes the special call of the subject races in their struggles, political and economic. Redress may not be specific, but the strong white races have their traditions to live up to, their duties to perform. The care of the weak is by God’s will the charge of the strong.’⁶³

It soon became clear that the Maori delegates were two of New Zealand’s greatest assets: ‘Wherever we went Mrs Bennett and Mrs Hammond captivated

everyone instantly.' Andrews enjoyed their company on a shopping expedition, remarking upon the 'stamina of the Maori race!' for dress shopping. Their enthusiasm and energy marked them for her as typical of native races more generally: 'Going around with them is like taking two children to a party'.⁶⁴ She was less able to infantilize them when describing their relationship with Hawai'ian royalty, however. Through the 'royal treatment' of 'her Maoris' Andrews began to see Bennett in particular as a woman of formidable status.

Upon arrival at the conference buildings, exciting news spread quickly that Princess Kawanananako, 'last' of the royal Hawai'ian line,⁶⁵ had announced that she would come to the opening of the conference, but only if she was seated between the two Maori delegates. Abigail Wahikaahuula Campbell Kawanananako was the daughter of a Hawai'ian woman from Maui and James Campbell, a millionaire financier and industrialist who was a powerful figure in Hawai'i at the turn of last century. She married a Hawai'ian of noble rank while living in San Francisco, returning to become actively involved in various Hawai'ian organizations, including the Daughters of Hawai'i and the YWCA. The elevation of the Maori delegates to quasi-royal status elicited expressions of admiration from Andrews, but also jealousy, anxiety and self-doubt. Royalty would not daunt New Zealand's Maori 'daughters', she predicted, but yet she wondered whether: 'They are both going to wear full warpaint and we were all bursting to see them'.⁶⁶ 'Warpaint' is here a double entendre, referring both to the common contemporary term for women's make-up, and for the body painting of 'natives'. On the night, '[o]ur two Maoris created quite an impression', Andrews continued. Claiming it was too hot for Maori attire, Bennett chose to wear formal evening dress. She 'looked absolutely regal in a black lace (backless) dress which she told me she had had made for an investiture at Government House. I was all swollen with pride to be associated with her!'

After the dinner, they travelled back to the conference lodgings with the princess, who took her lei and put it around Andrews' neck. This was the climax, Andrews wrote, it being 'the greatest favour she could show me . . . [I]t made me one of them so to speak'. Andrews had achieved her desire to become an honorary élite brown woman. She reported that Bennett was happy to see her kiss the princess's hand at the end of the night. '[Bennett] put it beautifully —', she wrote, "You have won your place. You have opened the way to our hearts."⁶⁷

On the last night of the conference, the New Zealand delegation was to make its long-awaited bi-lingual presentation. Without Andrews, the delegation, led by the Maori women, performed the chants and haka they had learned on board ship to the delight of the audience. Andrews' and Bennett's speech closed their presentation. Andrews gave the address in Maori while Bennett responded with the translation in English. In the process she seemed to embody Andrews' text that: 'Maori and pakeha alike send . . . warm greetings to the women of other lands . . . [in] common sisterhood'. This sisterhood was comprised of three collectivities. First, '[O]ur Maoris' were bound by 'ties of ancient ancestry and tradition' to 'our sisters of Hawai'i and other island races'. Second, Westerners were tied to 'our sisters of the Orient from whose ancient philosophies we have so much to learn'. Finally, Pakeha were linked to 'our sisters of America

and of this territory [Hawai'i] and of the Dominions of Canada and Australia who share our Aryan origin and tongue'. British ancestry, sharing English as their first language and their connection to place united settler women. Older indigenous connections did not preclude settlers' own attachments; indeed these attachments were the source of their supposedly common egalitarian outlook. Addressing her Aryan settler sisters, Andrews asserted geographical as well as political connections between them: 'The same blue waters lap our shores as do yours. The same fragrant winds whisper in our valleys and on our mountain peaks. The same pleasant sunshine caresses our fields and pasturelands. And in our hearts glow the same warm desire for the common weal'.⁶⁸ Thus Andrews described colonization as a benign force: the settler colonial landscape produced a progressive politics, effectively naturalizing colonial rule.

How did the audience perceive the two women? Again Andrews' desire to celebrate her own successes provides us with a glimpse of the underbelly of inter-racial harmony. Andrews was probably not exaggerating when she asserted that their performance had been a highlight of the conference: 'People were interested in our greeting I know, because one can always sense a kind of breathless attention which means more than politeness'.⁶⁹ But as she was to discover the next day, that breathlessness was not all that it seemed. Responses reflected confusion about the New Zealand racial context. Some delegates missed the point of a bi-lingual and cross-cultural presentation entirely, with amusing results: 'I'm afraid I shall never live down my Maori speech — on Thursday morning I was introduced to an American who looked at me in a bewildered fashion and then said "So you do speak English?" And someone asked one of our delegates at the dinner — "Does that lady speak any English at all?"'⁷⁰

For others, the dual presentation had been a moving experience beyond even Andrews' expectations. She learned that during their performance Dr Nadine Kavinoky (a North American specialist in family health) had whispered tearfully to her delegation leader that 'New Zealand has a lesson to teach the world!' Andrews continued: 'But you can never imagine what impressed her most. When we turned to walk back to our chairs I stepped aside to let Mrs Bennett precede me.' This was the first time Dr Kavinoky had seen 'deference extended to a "coloured person"'.⁷¹

A few days after the conference, Andrews and Bennett spoke at a Hawai'ian church service. The Kawaiahao Church in Honolulu had been housed in a grand old building since before US annexation, and still held morning services in Hawai'ian and English.⁷² In her official PPWA report of this event, Andrews increased her own importance in this event while reducing Bennett's. According to Andrews, Bennett merely provided the means for her connection with the local indigenous population: 'It was wonderful', she wrote, 'to see the instant response to the native race. I was a visitor: she was their sister.' But as her diary revealed, Bennett was a far more central figure than her official report implied. Both of them had attended the church service the previous week. Who had inspired that first visit is not clear. Andrews, the self-deprecating yet self-important colonialist, described Bennett as accompanying her. Yet it was likely that it was through Bennett's church and mission connections that Andrews was asked to speak on the following Sunday. This, too, Andrews incorporated into

her colonialist narrative of her own reluctant but necessary importance: 'Begobs, I'm never taking Mrs Bennett anywhere anymore' she wrote, for doing so had resulted in her being asked to address the assembly during the service on the following Sunday. By collapsing these two visits into one, Andrews was able to replace the Hawai'i'an congregation's welcome of Bennett with their reception of her address. If she ever returned to Honolulu, she concluded, 'I shall have some brown friends at all events'.⁷³

Once again, Andrews' apparent closeness to Bennett provided her with credentials as a friend of indigenous people. For Andrews, such friendship was firstly about being welcomed, and secondly about providing guidance. In her sermon she asserted that she felt 'at home' among the Hawai'i'an people: 'In appearance, language and in largeness of heart, our Maoris in New Zealand are very much like you, so when I come among you I do not feel that I am among strangers. I feel that I am at home.' She continued, 'I am not of the Maori race, I am a Pakeha, or as you would say, a Haole [white Hawai'i'an] — but one can be a Haole and still be sincere, anxious to help another race to work out its destiny.' In her account of racial difference, Maori and Hawai'i'ans had yet to face the difficult transition into modern life. Their destiny was to follow the West. She explained: 'My ancestors came to New Zealand a hundred years ago, bringing a more sophisticated civilisation with them than the Maoris were accustomed to. This new civilisation was not wholly bad, and I do not think the Maori race would want to go back and be just as they were before the white man came among them.' Having established progressive colonial rule as endorsed by indigenous people themselves, Andrews felt free to acknowledge the failure of some settler colonials to fulfill their potential. Not all Pakeha were 'sincere', she advised the congregation: 'unfortunately among the white people there are always some who think that because in certain ways they appear to have advanced further than other races, they are therefore superior and their civilisation should supersede all others'. The effects of this superiority complex had been felt among the Maori, but in the past: '[F]or a long time our Maoris were unsettled and unhappy and grave injustices were done to them, and even when the white man tried to put right the wrong he had done, he did not always act in the wisest way. Consequently because of us the Maori have been handicapped in his development as a free people. But there are many in New Zealand anxious to encourage this development.' Sincerity meant 'development' but also 'exchange', as Pakeha culture, like other Western cultures, could learn much from other cultural traditions: 'With the passage of a hundred years the Maori has taught some lessons to his pakeha brother. By remaining true to the tradition of his Maori culture he has earned respect and sympathy and understanding, so that a day of hope has now dawned and the Maori in New Zealand now look forward to a future where they will stand side by side with us in working out the common destiny of our two races.' In settler colonies such a destiny was necessarily co-joined through common domicile: 'New Zealand is not for the Pakeha: it is not for the Maori: it is ours jointly — our common home, in which we dwell in friendliness and good will. What is good in modern civilisation and what is good in ancient civilisation, have become our common heritage.'⁷⁴

Despite the great success of their performance in 1934, Andrews returned

to New Zealand not with inter-racial harmony in mind, but with the need to ‘preserve’ Maori culture and people. On her visit to the grass hut birthplace of the ‘last’ reigning Hawai’ian queen, Queen Emma, just before leaving Honolulu, Andrews may have been shown around by indigenous Hawai’ian women who were members of the Daughters of Hawai’i (this was the experience of conference visitors in 1928).⁷⁵ Princess Kawanananakoa was a member of the organization and a leading campaigner for the protection of cultural sites such as the Queen’s birthplace. Andrews viewed this tour as evidence of cultural demise rather than a celebration of cultural heritage. She described: ‘a note of tragedy about Hawai’ian things which makes me very sad and very determined to learn something of Maori problems in New Zealand so that we can preserve



Figure 3: Elsie Andrews with other delegation leaders in 1934.
Courtesy of Chatelaine, Rogers Publishing Ltd.

them as an individual race’.⁷⁶ In the end, despite her various experiences of Maori women’s power in Hawai’i, Andrews concluded that Maori as a people and the Maori culture could only be saved through white protection, their future depending upon Pakeha guardianship of their traditions and way of life.

Elsie Andrews’ account of the New Zealand delegation at the 1934 PPWC in Honolulu provides some remarkable insights into the work required in performing the inter-racial harmony desired by Pan-Pacific women internationalists. Her letter-book diaries, designed to be entertaining, but often flippant and self-effacing, nonetheless document something of the role of Victoria Bennett in making the New Zealand reputation, and of the complex exchange between these two women as a friendship of sorts unfolded between them. This friendship allowed Andrews a lens through which to reflect upon her Pakeha identity to the extent that she was eager for affirmation as an honourable colonialist.

Over following years, Andrews was less and less involved with the production of inter-racial harmony or the facilitation of cultural exchange. Until her untimely death in 1948, she climbed the PPWA hierarchy, first as Secretary-Treasurer,

then as a member of the New Zealand National Committee, and, from 1937, as Chairman of the International Programme Committee and one of three International Committee members. She was a key figure in the organization's formulation and in its recovery after World War II. She was far from the reluctant internationalist she had once claimed.

For Victoria Bennett, her first PPWA conference appearance provided opportunities for her own career as a woman activist and as an élite Maori in Hawai'i. She was a translator and an ambassador between Polynesians and Maori, Pakeha and Maori, and Pakeha and other white women in the Pacific region. Bennett continued to participate in PPWCs over following decades, endorsing their value at the inaugural Maori Women's Welfare League Conference held in Wellington in 1951. Advising that she and Jean Hammond had been privileged to attend in 1934, she explained: 'There is plenty to do at the Conferences. We lay down our problems and they tell us theirs. The problems are the same in every country.' Expressing the conference ideal of international exchange better than Andrews ever did, she asserted: 'It is meeting face to face that is going to help towards gaining peace in the world.'⁷⁷

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NOTES

*Thanks to Caroline Daley and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

1 Unsourced, undated newsclipping, Elsie Andrews' Papers, MS 312, Taranaki Museum, New Plymouth.

2 James Bennett, 'Maori as Honorary Members of the White Tribe', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29, 3 (2001), pp.33–54.

3 Manu A. Bennett, 'Bennett, Frederick Augustus', in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Vol. Three, 1901–1920*, Wellington, 1996, pp.49–51.

4 This blindness to indigenous geographical, cultural and spiritual regional connections is yet to be explored in western accounts of women's internationalist history. I would like to thank those who commented from the floor on this important point, during discussions in response to earlier versions of this paper presented at the Australian Women's Studies Association Conference, Brisbane, July 2003 and at the American Historical Association Pacific-Coast Branch Conference, Honolulu, August 2003. I would also like to thank Jo Diamond for her generous insights.

5 For my account of Maori women participating in the 1950s, see Fiona Paisley, 'A Pan-Pacific for the 1950s: Maori Women, the New Zealand delegation and Anti-Colonialism', *Pacific Historical Review*, forthcoming.

6 Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*, Princeton, 1997; Ian Tyrrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880–1930*, Chapel Hill, 1991; Fiona Paisley, 'Citizens of their World: Australian Feminism and Indigenous Rights in International Context, 1920s and 1930s', *Feminist Review*, 58 (Spring 1998), pp.66–84.

7 See Fiona Paisley, "'A Brighter Day": Constance Cooke and Aboriginal Rights as an International Cause', in Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins and Fiona Paisley, eds, *Across the Divide: Women and Aboriginal Issues in Australia, 1920s–1960s*, Canberra, forthcoming 2004.

8 Fiona Paisley, 'Cultivating Modernity: Culture and Internationalism in Australian Feminism's Pacific Age', *Journal of Women's History*, 14, 3 (2002), pp.105–32.

9 *Officers of the Pan-Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association of New Zealand 1978*, np, nd. See also Raewyn Dalziel, 'Pan-Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association 1931–', in Anne Else, ed., *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand/Nga Ropu Wahine o te Motu*, Wellington, 1993, pp.88–90.

10 See for example, Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918*, Ann Arbor, 1992.

11 Andrews kept diaries for the 1930, 1934 and 1937 conferences. By 1937, however, she was heavily involved in conference organizing and her diary suffered accordingly. The first section of this paper draws from the first two diaries to set the parameters of Andrews' conference persona. The second section focuses on the 1934 diary. Diaries, Elsie Andrews Papers, Taranaki Museum.

12 Dalziel, pp.88–90. Agnes J. Shelton, 'Elsie Andrews, M.B.E.', MS 88-19-14/14, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (ATL). *History of the New Zealand Branch of the Pan-Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association 1928–1978*, np, 1978, p.33; 'Notes of a deputation from N.Z. Women Teachers' Association', Res and Remits From NZ Women Teachers, E2, 1946/27ca, Pt.1, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

13 Diary 1934, p.94.

14 Elsie Andrews, 'Primary School Problems in New Zealand', *The Mid-Pacific*, XL, 3 (1930), pp.213–17.

15 Diary 1934, pp.116–19.

16 Autobiography, unpaginated, Elsie Andrews Papers, Taranaki Museum.

17 Diary 1934, p.175.

18 Diary 1930, p.60.

19 Diary 1934, p.70.

20 Diary 1930, p.59.

21 Rumi Yasutake, 'Feminism, Nationalism and Internationalism: Japanese Women at the Pan-Pacific Women's Conferences (PPWC), 1928–1940', paper presented at the Crossroads Conference, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Hawai'i, Manoa, August, 2001.

22 Diary 1934, p.78.

23 Diary 1930, p.97.

- 24 Diary 1930, p.71.
- 25 Rupp, 'Getting to Know You', in *Worlds of Women*, pp.180–204.
- 26 Alison J. Laurie, 'Female Friends or Lesbian Lovers — Elsie Andrews and Muriel Kirton', available at <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/wisc/staff/alison.html>
- 27 Diary 1934, p.121.
- 28 *ibid.*, p.136.
- 29 Diary 1930, p.93.
- 30 *ibid.*, p.92.
- 31 *ibid.*, p.95.
- 32 Diary 1934, p.51. Such an equivalent, a visit to an 'ancient Maori stockade', was regularly advertised in the *Bulletin of the Pan-Pacific Union*. See, for example, *Bulletin of the Pan-Pacific Union*, 125 (July 1930), p.14. The Pan-Pacific Union was the parent organization of the PPWCs and published lengthy conference reports.
- 33 Diary 1930, p.5.
- 34 See Fiona Paisley, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights*, Melbourne, 2000; Fiona Paisley, 'For a brighter day: Constance Ternent Cooke', in Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins, and Fiona Paisley, eds, *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*, forthcoming 2004.
- 35 *Proceedings of the Second Pan-Pacific Women's Conference*, Melbourne, 1930, pp.127–45.
- 36 Diary 1930, p.38.
- 37 Newsclipping, no source. Elsie Andrews Papers, Taranaki Museum.
- 38 Presentation on the Pan-Pacific Conference to New Plymouth Peace Council, 3 December 1934. Elsie Andrews Papers, Taranaki Museum.
- 39 *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 19 May 1934, p.1.
- 40 'Historical Background', in Anna Rogers et al., eds, *Te Timatanga Tatau Tatau: Early Stories from Founding Members of the Maori Women's Welfare League*, Wellington, 1993, pp.xii–xviii. The League sent its own representatives to the PPWA. 'Minutes of the Inaugural Conference of the Maori Women's Welfare League . . . 1951', pp.10, 18, New Zealand Maori Women's Welfare League papers, MS 1396-001, ATL.
- 41 *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 10 July 1934, p.4.
- 42 Maori women were members of New Zealand women's organizations with international networks such as the Young Women's Christian Association and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Tania Rei, Geraldine McDonald and Ngahui Te Awekotuku, 'Nga Ropu Wahine Maori; Maori Women's Organisations', in Else, ed., *Women Together*, pp.3–15; Tania Rei, *Maori Women and the Vote*, Wellington, 1993.
- 43 Diary 1934, p.42. Barbara Brookes and Margaret Tennant, 'Maori and Pakeha Women: Many Histories, Divergent Pasts?' in Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant, eds, *Women in History 2*, Wellington, 1992, p.35.
- 44 *The New Zealand Girl*, 1 March 1936, p.4.
- 45 *The New Zealand Girl*, 1 February 1936, p.2.
- 46 Diary 1934, p.20.
- 47 *ibid.*, p.121.
- 48 *History of the New Zealand Branch*, p.38.
- 49 Diary 1934, p.15.
- 50 *ibid.*, p.29.
- 51 A women's haka poi features swaying movements, fierce expressions, and chants. For an example of Pakeha learning haka poi, see Alan Armstrong, *Maori Games and Haka: Instructions, Words and Actions*, Wellington, 1964, p.83.
- 52 Diary 1934, p.28.
- 53 *ibid.*, p.42.
- 54 *ibid.*, pp.42, 50, 53.
- 55 *ibid.*, p.102.
- 56 *ibid.*, pp.27, 17.
- 57 Armstrong, *Maori Games*, p.77.
- 58 Diary 1934, p.21.
- 59 *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 3 August 1934, p.7.
- 60 Albert Pierce Taylor, *Under Hawai'ian Skies*, Honolulu, 1922, pp.333–4.

- 61 Diary 1934, p.54.
- 62 *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 3 August 1934, p.7.
- 63 *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 20 August 1934, p.3.
- 64 Diary 1934, pp.58, 60.
- 65 George F. Nellist, *Women of Hawai'i, Honolulu*, 1929, pp.155–6.
- 66 Diary 1934, pp.72, 78.
- 67 Diary 1934, pp.98, 99, 101.
- 68 'Elsie Andrews M.B.E.', p.11.
- 69 Diary 1934, p.99.
- 70 *ibid.*, p.98.
- 71 *ibid.*, pp.178–9.
- 72 Olive Wyndette, *Islands of Destiny: A History of Hawai'i*, Rutland, Vermont, 1968, p.260.
- 73 Diary, 1934, p.150.
- 74 'Elsie Andrews M.B.E.', p.12.
- 75 As recorded on a 1928 photograph reproduced in a special report on the first Pan-Pacific Women's Conference. *The Mid-Pacific*, XXXVI, 6, 1928, p.432.
- 76 Diary 1934, p.134.
- 77 'Minutes of the Inaugural Conference of the Maori Women's Welfare League . . . 1951',