

"But I don't really blame the tribunal, and certainly not the part-Maori people, nor even their leadership. This is a problem created by successive elected governments," he said.

Basically, Ross Baker's position can be summarised as:

1. The Treaty of Waitangi was signed at Waitangi on February 6, 1840 by over 500 chiefs to give sovereignty to Britain and therefore the tangata maori to come under the protection of British laws. No more, no less. It was a simple document to create one people under one law and one flag.

"We must not forget, as Governor Hobson shook each chief's hand after they had signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi at Waitangi he repeated, "He iwi tahi tatou - We are now one people" to which the whole gathering of over 1000 people agreed with three hearty cheers," said Ross.

2. Today's part-Maori interests are attempting - and they have had considerable help from successive New Zealand governments - to embellish the treaty as a founding document which offered much more to part-Maori than was ever intended or understood by both races at the time.

3. The situation today is that New Zealand is headed towards a government where part-Maori will enjoy in New Zealand, separate privileges and laws which do not apply to New Zealanders who cannot claim a minute trace of Maori ancestry. Ross Baker - and now a growing number of New Zealanders - call this an apartheid form of government.

4. The Waitangi Tribunal, and now other arms of government, are making decisions that step outside fundamental democracy to the exclusive advantage of people with part-Maori heritage.

5. Lieutenant Governor Hobson did not have the authority to give Maori special rights in the Treaty not already enjoyed by the people of England, therefore Article 3 stated, "the same rights as the people of England".

The Treaty preceded a more important charter

Ross Baker's latest publication is a 32 page argument for November 16, 1840, to be the true date for New Zealanders to celebrate.

This was the date Queen Victoria signed a Royal Charter giving independent rule to New Zealand. New Zealand became an independent British colony under the watchful eye of the British parliament.

"Again, this has only happened because successive governments have not done their job on behalf of all Kwis, 'the same rights for all'. They have allowed treatyists, lawyers and iwi tribal groups to manipulate and re-write history for their own purposes. And who can blame them if the government lets them get away with it," he said.

The treaty, Ross argues, was a necessary prelude to that charter being signed because independent rule could not happen without tangata maori agreeing to becoming one people under one law.

A few months after that charter was signed, the first legislative Council of New Zealand sat - on May 24, 1841.

So why is this record of history so important?

"Because it is clear evidence that the treaty's purpose was a much simpler one," said Ross.

"This is the tragedy today, that a legal industry has grown around attempting to re-interpret the treaty so that part-Maori have a privileged place above all other New Zealanders based on a document that was never intended to give preference and advantage to tangata maori over non-Maori.

Anybody can speculate where this issue will be in the next few years, but Ross says he is now confident that the nation is waking up to the whole issue.

Family heritage

Born in 1941 in Cambridge, Ross spent most of his life in Rotorua where he and his wife Bev raised one daughter. Much of his working life was in partnership with his brother at Baker Bros Service Station. Ross also founded Heron Development Ltd designing and building some of New Zealand's most successful road and race cars, winning many national as well as local championships over the years.

In the early 1970s he began to take an interest in his family heritage as a fifth generation Kiwi. He is descended from the Buckland and Taylor families in Auckland, both lineages having their names remembered though local names such as the largest stock-market in New Zealand at the time (now Newmarket), Bucklands Beach and that branch's family home, the preserved Highwic House. The

Taylors introduced the name 'Glen' to several areas, being the names of their farm estates at Glen Innes, Glendowie and Glen Orchard on the northern side of the Tamaki River. The family home, Alberton, is also heritage listed.

"I was reading all the background to these families who played a role in founding Auckland and I started to see differences in their version of events to what was being

written today.

"And it has actually got worse over the years. New Zealand history is being distorted to suit self-interest."

Through this interest, Ross eventually made contact in 1988 with people such as Bob Martin and Peter Clarke, and their mutual interest in establishing the One New Zealand Foundation Inc resulted in an organisation with over 3000 members at its peak.

So even 25 years ago, Ross wasn't completely alone in his concerns. In the past year, clear signals have emerged that the country is waking up to the need for public debate on the Treaty and our constitution. And it may not be as cordial a conversation as television advertising is pre-supposing.

Auckland's biggest daily newspaper has run an article about part-Maori heritage claims over 3600 Auckland properties and quoted one source as the rights providing a recipe for corruption. In late winter of last year, a 'Pakeha Party' phenomenon attracted over 50,000 internet visitors in just a few days. A new political movement, the 1 Law 4 All Party, while in its infancy, has several hundred paid up members.

For Ross Baker and those few pioneers who have battled the odds to bring this sensitive debate into public focus, they must be a little less frustrated in knowing that the sleeping giant of the non-Maori voter, who is paying for, but not enjoying any privileges of racial heritage, is waking from his slumber.

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