

Pride, Pioneers and Prejudice¹

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Mihimihi

Tena tatou katoa.

Tena tatou e runga e te kaupapa o te ra nei.

No reira, ka tika me mau mahara tatou ki a ratou kua whakapau kaha i roto i nga whawhai o te kaupapa nei.

Heoi, ki a koe e te whaea Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan, moe mai ra.

Moe mai ra i roto i nga ringaringa o te Ariki.

Kati.

Apiti hono, tatai hono, ratou ki a ratou.

Apiti hono, tatai hono tatou te hunga ora ki a tatou no reira tena tatou katoa.

Ki a koe Julian, he mihi ki a koe, huri noa ki nga kaiwhakahaere o te hui nei.

Tena koutou.

Ki a tatou kua tai tena tatou katoa.

Introduction

I would like to begin by congratulating Dr Jennifer Curtin, The Department of Political Studies and The University of Auckland for providing an opportunity for discussing issues pertaining to our national game.

I am of the belief that rugby is not examined enough at an academic level throughout the country, despite that most citizens interact with rugby at some level during their lives. Whether it be as a child who has to brave frozen fields in the middle of winter, as a mother who prepares oranges for halftime, or as a grandfather who recounts his earliest memories of a great All Black who he saw play during his childhood, rugby is a part of who we are. It brings with it a particular culture, a proud history and is arguably this country's greatest export.

Yet although rugby is inextricably intertwined with our lives, it receives very little academic attention. This is not to take away from those scholars who do focus their intellectual microscope upon our national game. Those people, however rare, do provide an invaluable service towards both increasing one's understanding of the game, educating others as to the significance of the sport, and how it impacts upon society in general. Critical analysis will only better our knowledge when it comes to the, at times, 'religious' relationship our country has with a game imported from Mother Britain.

There are three themes that I would like to briefly touch upon in arguing reasons why the New Zealand Maori Men's Team, hereinafter to be referred to as 'New Zealand Maori', should continue to exist; that the team has been and remains to be ambassadors for their people and culture; the outstanding contribution made by Maori rugby pioneers to the early development of the game; and finally the sad history of Maori players being subjected to the rule of Apartheid in South Africa and the lack of a strong response from the New Zealand Rugby Union [NZRU] and successive New Zealand governments.

Ambassadors of Maori: Pride, 'Maori Style' and Maori Culture

New Zealand Maori have historically been 'Ambassadors of Maori'. There are three strong topics that emerge when examining their ambassadorial role; that the people who they represent, Maori, are extremely proud of the team; that the team is known for the 'style' of rugby it plays which has been coined after the people they represent; and that the team is remembered for delivering unique features of Maori culture such as waiata and haka during the team's overseas tours.

To quote the most successful New Zealand Maori Men's Rugby Team Coach Matt Te Pou: *"One of the things I'd always experienced growing up in Maori communities was that there are two main areas of Maori pride – the Maori Battalion and the Maori All Blacks"*². Most, if not all Maori, would agree with the sentiments expressed by Te Pou.

Dr Monty Soutar, author of "Nga Tama Toa: C Company 28 (Maori) Battalion 1939-1945", summarises the impact of the Maori Battalion:

*"They [C Company of the Maori Battalion] have passed to the next generations a priceless heritage and an undying legacy...Every man in this book bequeaths a powerful personal inheritance. Their individual stories will continue to flourish among their descendants. They are the stuff of legend, yet the achievements of yesteryear remain just as relevant and valid for Maori today"*³.

P.B. Daly made this observation in 1965 about New Zealand Maori:

*"Maori rugby is, and is always recognised as, an expression, at times a most vivid expression, of the current mood of the people...Traditionally what we expect from Maori rugby is the ebullience, the joy of living, the simplicity, yet artful skill of the people whom these players represent. We expect it because we have seen it, these qualities fused into a bubbling mixture that leaves us all feeling better, feeling happier, less carping, less demanding"*⁴.

There are, to my mind, two strong similarities between the Maori Battalion and New Zealand Maori. They both represent the same race of people and they both provide unique cultural expressions within the respective environments in which they operate. It is due to these two reasons that they endear themselves to those who they do battle on behalf of.

Most Maori with a passion will defend either the Maori Battalion or New Zealand Maori. They do, after all, remain rare national cultural bastions of Maori pride. I would also argue that most would struggle to think of any similar institution that engenders a similar sense of pride amongst Maori. At a personal level players who are selected to play for New Zealand Maori, remember a great sense of gratification being invoked. Former All Black and New Zealand Maori Captain Tane Norton recounts:

“My father was fairer in complexion than I was. Being on a marae, I had no experience of that at all. I was only playing rugby in the country and old George Couch said I could play for the Canterbury Maori. It was the most magnificent day of my life; playing for Canterbury Maori and getting my green blazer. I was very proud of it”⁵.

Norton’s reaction to being selected for New Zealand Maori is not uncommon. Current New Zealand Maori Coach and former player and All Black, Jamie Joseph, comments:

“My father [Jim Joseph] was a Maori All Black and all the time as a kid I wanted to be just like Dad. The Maori team was the team. I actually got into trouble over that attitude when I was playing for Otago in 1991 under Laurie Mains and he blew me up for putting the Prince of Wales game before the Otago team. But I didn’t care because I wanted to get selected for the Maori All Blacks. Once I was in the All Blacks though, the Maori teams always came second. I didn’t like that”⁶.

If there is one defining factor of Maori rugby, apart from the players being of Maori descent, it would be the way in which the game is played. New Zealand Maori use every man on the team in the pursuit of crossing the opposition’s line, they play a spontaneous, non-patterned style of game and they invent moves that have never been seen on a rugby field at that level of competition before. Fans who witness such play can often recall viewing the triple scissors being executed by the Going Brothers, the somersault try achieved by Bob Barber, or Carlos Spencer chip kicking with his knee. One rugby commentator provided the following passage to describe ‘Maori rugby’:

“The Maoris, of course, have long been known for the unorthodoxy and brightness of their Rugby ‘style’. This does not necessarily mean the harum-scarum stuff that is sometimes provided for in Sunday matches. Maori ‘style’ is a combination of many things, of which speed of foot is one factor, and speed of thinking another factor.

Probably the most important of all is the speed with which Maori teams seem to spot the weakness of other teams while covering their own weakness”⁷.

The license to play in such an expansive and attractive way can be traced to the founder of the New Zealand Maori Men’s Rugby Team, Ned Parata. He stated during their inaugural year of 1910:

“These objects were...to play Rugby as it should be played – a good, fast, open game. We demonstrated in Australia and New Zealand that football could be played differently than the usual way. Open up the game and the man must play the ball instead of the man”⁸.

The 1926/1927 Tour of New Zealand Maori of New Zealand, Australia, Ceylon, France, England, Wales and Canada was when Maori rugby took the world stage. It was a tour that saw the team play 40 matches for 30 victories. The more noticeable statistic however was that New Zealand Maori had scored 741 points, with 255 against. While in Europe, the Prince of Wales held in team in such high regard that he had commemorative medals made for each of the players. Presented by Governor-General Sir Charles Fergusson upon their return, the medal had the words ‘*Ich Dien*’ (I serve) that is surrounded by the symbol of the highest order of the Knighthood, the Order of the Garter. On the garter itself are the words of Edward III ‘*Honi soit qui mal y pense*’ (Evil to him who evil thinks). The Prince’s fascination with the team continued when in 1928 in New Zealand he presented a trophy for an internal Maori competition titled ‘The Prince of Wales Cup’. The cup was the prize for regional Maori rugby supremacy until 1994.

The style of play was further admired by the French who hosted the New Zealand Maori Tour of 1926/1927. It is a small known fact that the poster the French used to advertise their tests used a silhouette of George Nepia following the great fullback’s appearance against France with the All Black Invincible side in 1925. Their respect for Maori rugby would be further enhanced following the travels of New Zealand Maori during their historic tour. As Wattie Barclay, Captain of New Zealand Maori for that tour, reflected:

“...I agree with Sam Gemmell when he maintains that the French learned from our tour, and quickly adapted our style of play, even to running backwards with the ball, and to rugby purists that is a dreadful thing to do”⁹.

Not only can the origins of 'French Flair' be traced to the New Zealand Maori Tour of 1926/1927, but Pacific Island rugby and Australian rugby also owe much to tours undertaken by New Zealand Maori. It is well documented that New Zealand Maori undertook successive tours of Pacific Island nations and thus assisted the development of rugby within the countries of Tonga, Fiji and Western Samoa. New Zealand Maori have toured Fiji a total of eight times, with Western Samoa and Tonga having been visited five times each.

With Australia, New Zealand Maori have toured our Tasman neighbours on eleven occasions. Evidence of the impact of New Zealand Maori tours to Australia is provided in the following quote by a former President of the New South Wales Rugby Union when he stated at the first New South Wales reception for New Zealand Maori when they toured in 1935, "*When we went through our leanest period, Maori teams helped us with their attractive play*"¹⁰. When George Nepia led his men that year, the side was sent with a very clear mission: to reverse the flagging riches of rugby in Australia from the number of men who were turning to professionalism in the form of rugby league by playing attractive rugby. The goal was realised as record gate takings equated to a £400 profit for the tourists.

One constant throughout the history of Maori rugby has been the demand of people overseas to view players performing waiata and haka. The genesis of this regular request can be found in the 1888 Natives when they organised with their host's concerts that were performed during the evenings. They did so in order to meet costs incurred and the organising committee anticipated making a profit. The first New Zealand Maori Team of 1910 were expected to perform and agreed to do so as long as no 'smoke concerts' were allowed. In 1935, during their expedition of Australia, a 'Haka Ball' was organised at the Royal Theatre in Sydney. 250 people attended and the team sang several choruses of their favourite tunes. Earlier in the tour at Brisbane, the squad was recorded by local station 4ZB which played their songs over the air. During their 1958 Tour of Australia Sir Henry Abel Smith, the Governor of Queensland, invited the tourists to Government House which was the first time such a request was extended to a rugby team in Queensland. The Brisbane Mayor, Sir Thomas Reginald Groom, also hosted the team. At both receptions the team was asked to sing.

Former New Zealand Maori Captain and All Black, Pat Walsh could recall singing waiata such as 'Pokarekare Ana', 'Hoki Mai' and 'Toko Wairua'.

The development of haka being performed before a rugby match is one of great interest given the prominence of 'Ka Mate' in today's society. The first recording of a haka being performed on the rugby field is in 1884 when the first New Zealand Team toured New South Wales. At that time there were two Maori players; Jack Tairaroa and Joe Warbrick. One could reasonably assume that it was due to the efforts of those men that the New Zealand side adopted the practise that year. They recited the words "*Ake, ake, kia kaha*". The same haka was repeated for the 1888 Natives. When the tourists performed the haka in front of the Surrey crowd they wore headbands and piupiu. The British Press ridiculed it labelling it "*a whoop in the vernacular which caused great amusement*"¹¹. In 1926 during the epic tour made by New Zealand Maori of New Zealand, Australia, Ceylon, France, England, Wales and Canada, the English newspapers wrote of Pini Haupapa, leader of the haka, "*Haupapa's terrific gesticulations, grimaces, rolling eyes, gnashing teeth and obtrusive tongue showed he is an excellent comedian*"¹².

'Ka Mate' became used extensively during the 1905 Original Tour of the British Isles, France and America. The two Maori of that side, Vice Captain Billy Stead and Billy Cunningham from Auckland would have assumed a leadership role in the performance of the haka. Ka Mate has remained the haka of choice for the All Blacks. However until the 1985 Tour to Argentina by the All Blacks, the performances of Ka Mate by the national squad had been less than desirable. The actions have on occasion been confused and wrong and the pronunciation of Te Reo Maori has been less than satisfactory. The two Maori rugby players credited with reversing the fortune of the Ka Mate performance by the All Blacks is attributed to Wayne 'Buck' Shelford and Hika Reid.

During the All Blacks Tour to Argentina, Shelford spoke with Reid and they agreed that Ka Mate could be performed only if All Black players were committed to learning the correct actions and to pronouncing the words accurately. The remainder of the All Blacks agreed with their colleagues request and the haka 'Ka Mate' began to be performed as we know it today.

It was reintroduced to New Zealand spectators during the 1987 Rugby World Cup after a kaumatua approached Sheldford to do so. Prior to that time Ka Mate was only performed overseas by All Black teams.

New Zealand Maori and Maori players have been great 'Ambassadors of Maori'. This has been expressed through the relationship they enjoy with their people and the pride they feel for the team, the 'style' that excites spectators that has been given the title 'Maori' and the aspects of Maori culture they exhibit in the form of haka and waiata. Debatably the most well-known expression of not only Maori identity but New Zealand identity, the haka 'Ka Mate', owes its origins and correct performance to Maori players. New Zealand Maori have ensured that the practise of performing haka as a pre-match ritual remained in vogue during a time when All Blacks reserved the routine to overseas tours.

International Rugby Pioneers: Warbrick, Ellison, Stead and Parata

It is often assumed in the modern era that the contribution Maori have made to the game of rugby has only been on the field. That is that Maori remain sparse as administrators. The contribution Maori made to the early development of rugby is colossal. Consider the following; Joe Warbrick who led reputedly the longest sporting tour ever and who brought to Mother England an expansive style of rugby that was foreign to the English public at the time; Tom Ellison who created new positions on the field, who wrote one of the earliest pieces of New Zealand rugby literature and who suggested the now famous All Black uniform including the iconic silver fern; Billy Stead who provided a leadership role within the 1905 Originals, who instructed his backline how to play the expansive style of game and who wrote the voluminous 'The Complete Rugby Footballer'; and finally Ned Parata who not only oversaw the development of Bay of Plenty Rugby Union but who initiated and led Maori rugby for thirty years and installed within the team a style of game that the team would be known internationally for.

Joseph 'Joe' Astbury Warbrick was educated at St Stephens Native School in Auckland. In 1887 aged 15, he took the field at fullback for Auckland Clubs and in the process became the youngest ever first class player in the history of New Zealand rugby.

Warbrick gained a reputation as a player who could kick long distance drop goals, at times with bare feet. In 1884 he, along with Jack Tairaroa, relative of Tom Ellison, would become the first Maori players to play for a New Zealand selection when a team was chosen to tour New South Wales in 1884.

Warbrick's contribution to the early development of rugby was exceptional. His most notable achievement was the famous 1888 Natives Tour. The 14-month excursion would pass through the countries of New Zealand, Australia, Egypt and the British Isles. 107 games were played for 80 wins and the tour averaged three games a week. The fact that the team only secured four penalty goals during the entire tour is a testimony to the free-flowing style that they adopted. At times opposing teams fielded 16 to 18 players to make a fist of the game.

Tamati Rangiwahia Erihana Ellison, otherwise known as Tom Ellison, hailed from Otakou on the Otago Peninsula. Of Ngai Tahu and Te Ati Awa, Ellison appears to have been introduced to the sport of rugby by his cousin and prominent Maori rugby player Jack Tairaroa in 1881. Ellison participated in the 1888 Natives Tour where he was the second highest point scorer with 113 points that included 43 tries. Six years later he played at halfback and it was in this position that he developed the new position of wing-forward, developed to stop interference from passing from the scrum. It was formally adopted by Wellington and then throughout New Zealand provincial rugby before the creation of the eight-man scrum in 1932. Ellison also devised the 2-3-2 scrum.

In 1892 the New Zealand Rugby Union [NZRU] was officially formed and the following year at the organisation's inaugural Annual General Meeting, Ellison suggested that the uniform should be a black jersey with a silver fern monogram, a black cap, white knickerbockers and a pair of stockings. With a change to black shorts in 1901, the uniform of the All Blacks has remain relatively unchanged since Ellison first proposed what it should be in 1893. That same year the New Zealand Rugby Team toured New South Wales and Queensland with Ellison acting as both captain and coach. Five years later Ellison publicly spoke about his belief that rugby players should be paid the equivalent of their normal wages when on tour.

In 1902 he published one of the first New Zealand manuals on how to play the game, titled 'The Art of Rugby Football'.

Another early Maori rugby pioneer was John William 'Billy' Stead from Invercargill. Stead was an inside back who made his All Black debut in 1903. Two years later Stead was the vice captain to Dave Gallaher for the famed 1905 'Original' Tour to England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France. Stead was the main strategist of the side and fellow back Jimmy Hunter was said to have exclaimed at an Originals Reunion fifty years later to Stead "*Without you I was nothing*"¹³. One can understand Hunter's admiration for his fellow team mate as the 1905 backline scored 164 of the 205 tries scored by the visitors during that tour. Stead would end his playing days by coming out of retirement after being persuaded by Ned Parata to play for New Zealand Maori in their inaugural season in 1910.

Much like Ellison, Stead printed his thoughts on how the game should be played in the tome 'The Complete Rugby Footballer'. It is alleged that Stead wrote most of the text, as Gallagher quickly lost interest in the project. The 320 page publication was written in three weeks and contains 19 chapters. Subjects covered included the early development of rugby, the working of the scrum, tactics and also details the 1905 All Black campaign. Stead continued to write prolifically on the game as a columnist for both the NZ Truth and Southland Times newspapers. He also served in other rugby roles such as a referee, selector and administrator. Again like Ellison, Stead remains one of two Maori who have coached the All Blacks when he took the helm for the first two tests against the 1921 Springboks.

The notion of having a national team consisting solely of Maori first emerges on the national stage in 1888. It was that year that Joe Warbrick believed that such a team could travel overseas and emulate the deeds of the Aboriginal Cricket Team that toured England in 1867. In 1904 the British Team arrived under the captaincy of David 'Darky' Bedell-Sivwright. Wiremu Teihoka 'Ned' Parata from Puketeraki, petitioned the NZRU to consider forming a team of Maori players to meet the English squad. The NZRU refused, yet a Rotorua XV met the tourists and enjoyed a victory after Tuoro Pango kicked the winning conversion.

Four years later an Arawa XV encountered the Anglo-Welsh side after the NZRU refused to guarantee expenses incurred from hosting such a match. On this occasion the spoils of victory were enjoyed by the tourists.

The move to establish the New Zealand Maori Men's Rugby Team eventuated from a threat, rather than a sign of goodwill on the part of the NZRU. Former Maori All Black, Albert Arapeta 'Opai' Asher, led a team of Maori rugby players to tour Australia in 1908. Under the illusion they were to play the amateur code, they arrived in Sydney and were greeted by their hosts, New South Wales Rugby League, and were persuaded to play the thirteen-man sport. Upon returning Asher enlisted men throughout New Zealand to play professional rugby league and he and his team that toured Australia were subsequently banned for life by the NZRU.

In February 1910, Parata again raised the concept of a national team consisting only of Maori men. With the support of the NZRU Chairman George Dixon who was deeply concerned with the exodus of Maori to the new sport that was introduced from Australia, an application was made by the Auckland Rugby Union and accepted by the NZRU. Subsequently the NZRU cabled the New South Wales Rugby Union to see if they would host the newly formed indigenous squad, to which they accepted.

The contribution made by Warbrick, Ellison, Stead and Parata cannot be overlooked. While the commitment of Parata to New Zealand Maori remains unquestioned, Stead obviously believed in the concept as he renounced his retirement to play for the squad. Ellison played for the 1888 Natives and Warbrick was the drive behind the side after initially trying to establish a team that consisted only of Maori. It can be said of all four men that they believed in the concept of a national team with only Maori players and if modern New Zealand society is to respect their pioneering efforts, then we are obliged to argue for the continued existence of New Zealand Maori.

Subjected to Apartheid

One cannot fully appreciate the plight of New Zealand Maori without looking closer at the sad saga of rugby contact with South Africa. It seems appropriate that we should be having this discussion today, given that it is the thirty-year anniversary of the Waikato-Springbok match that was cancelled due to protests.

The justification for the non-inclusion of Maori players in the successive All Black tours to the republic of 1928, 1949 and 1960 was that the NZRU could not guarantee safety of the Maori players. The perspective of some Maori players was that the NZRU and New Zealand Government should have done more to uphold the rights of Maori players. In response, the NZRU initiated overseas tours for New Zealand Maori to placate Maori concerns. The view of the public who opposed sporting contact with Apartheid South Africa was that no rugby tour should occur until the racist political regime had been dismantled. On a regular basis some people call for the New Zealand Maori to be abandoned as they view the side as an example of apartheid due to the fact that the side is racially selected. Rather than viewing the team as a case of positive affirmation, they liken the team to that of consecutive South African squads that existed under the apartheid regime.

Race first became an issue between South Africa and New Zealand in 1919. Following the conclusion of the First World War, the New Zealand Forces side won an inter-services competition. The Transvaal Rugby Union issued an invitation to the squad who were eager to see the game of rugby union revitalised after the war. The proposed tour was discussed at the Annual General Meeting of the South African Rugby Board (SARB). The meeting referred to "*...the question of procedure in view of the fact that the New Zealand team was believed to contain one or more Maoris*"¹⁴.

A resolution passed by SARB was subsequently cabled to the South African High Commissioner in London. It read "*Confidential. If visitors include Maoris tour would be wrecked and immense harm politically and otherwise would follow. Please explain the position fully and try and arrange exclusion*"¹⁵. Despite the team not having any Maori players, All Black player Sergeant Nathaniel 'Ranji' Wilson, of English and West Indian parentage, was required to remain on the boat when the remaining players of the team berthed at Durban, South Africa.

Two years later saw the South African team in New Zealand for the first time. A match was arranged between the tourists and New Zealand Maori at McLean Park, Napier. Believed to be the first time the Springboks had encountered 'coloured players', the visitors turned their backs on a group of Maori performers before kick-off and refused to shake the hands of their opponents. The game itself was shrouded in controversy with many believing that New Zealand Maori should have been victorious. The final result was a narrow one point win to South Africa. Following the match a telegraph sparked more controversy. South African correspondent Charles Beckett sent a telegram that stated "*Bad enough having play team officially designated New Zealand natives but spectacle thousands Europeans frantically cheering on band of coloured men to defeat members of own race was too much for Springboks*"¹⁶. Sir Peter Buck joined the debate and commented that if the South African Team did not alter its attitude towards Maori, then the NZRU should not invite the tourists back again.

In 1925 the NZRU Chairman Stan Dean declared that no Maori would play against the Springboks when the All Blacks embarked upon their first tour of South Africa in 1928. The Akarana Maori Association protested and stated that the tour would be "*...a slur on the dignity and manhood of the Maori*"¹⁷. The NZRU responded by making public that they had consulted with the Maori Advisory Board (MAB), the governance committee of Maori rugby. The MAB in turn relied upon information handed to them from the Maori Members of Parliament, who themselves had been informed of the situation by Prime Minister Gordon Coates. Coates had been in correspondence with the South African Prime Minister JB Hertzog who indicated that having Maori in the team would be the cause of great embarrassment. In order to extinguish Maori opposition to the 1928 tour, the NZRU sent NZ Maori on their epic 1926/1927 Tour to New Zealand, Australia, Ceylon, France, England, Wales and Canada.

The second Springbok squad arrived on New Zealand soil in 1937. The year prior SARB had met and agreed with the recommendations of the 1921 Springbok Manager not to play against New Zealand Maori as the players from that excursion did not wish to take part in the match. Johan de Villiers, representative of the Western Province, went one step further and asked the SARB to take all necessary steps to ensure that no Maori play against the tourists in any of the games.

Tai Mitchell from Te Arawa, member of the MAB on behalf of the Bay of Plenty, issued a memorial in the press that outlined what he foresaw as the bottom lines being for Maori involvement with the tour. They included that no Maori team or player should play against them; that no Maori should be involved in official receptions; and that Maori should be protected from any racial undercurrents brought to bear by the visitors. By July, 1936, Mitchell's wishes gained momentum as hui in Turangaewaewae and Tuahiwi supported his stance. Dean responded by saying that he would consult with the MAB and that it was the decision of rugby authorities as to where and when the Springboks would be played. The NZRU also agreed to take the concerns of the memorial to SARB. The end result however was that no game was scheduled with New Zealand Maori as the NZRU stated that the itinerary was too short for the game to be programmed.

1949 was the next year when the two rugby powerhouses would clash, this time the All Blacks being invited to tour South Africa. Former New Zealand Maori Captain, Kiwi Blake, recalls his unusual selection to the New Zealand Maori squad:

"In 1948 the Wairarapa selectors told me that I would probably not be able to go overseas in 1949 and play against South Africa with the All Blacks, because I had dark blood in me. My grandfather was a quarter Negro. Some said 'Would you take a nomination for the Maori team?' I said, 'Well if I can't go to South Africa then I certainly will, so long as I can play rugby'. So they nominated me in the Maori team and when it came out, I was going to Fiji. I never even played in the Maori trial"¹⁸.

Any belief that Blake and some Maori rugby players may not have been selected on ability to tour South Africa with the All Blacks is quickly dismissed in the following interview with Blake:

"I remember Vince Bevan. Vince didn't play for the Maoris in 1948 because he thought he would get to South Africa. Then he missed out. Vince, myself and Johnnie Smith played in the final trial before they went to South Africa. One of the selectors called us out afterwards and said 'If you had been eligible, you would have all gone'"¹⁹.

One difference between this encounter with South Africa and those of the past was that apartheid was now an official government policy with the election of the Nationalist Party in 1948. Headed by Dr Daniel Malan, a Nazi sympathiser, he was the man responsible for implementing the first raft of legislation that promoted apartheid.

The NZRU reaction to the change of government was that any player selected must be “*wholly European*”²⁰. The presence of the representative of the MAB on the NZRU, Kingi Tahiwī, implied that Maori rugby administrators were supportive of the move. Ned Parata, sent a telegram that read:

*“The matter has never been discussed by our Maori Board. Your Council has deliberately failed in its duty to discuss the matter with the Maori Advisory Board, which is representative of all Maori players and of Maori people. Any expression of opinion by Kingi Tahiwī could only be his own personal opinion”*²¹.

Hurt within the Maori community was deep-seated. Member of Parliament for Southern Maori, Sir Eruera Tirikatene, commented “*The New Zealand [Rugby] Union has broken the comradeship of Europeans in New Zealand with the Maori people that has been cemented on the battlefields where New Zealanders have fought*”²². In 1949, as was the case in 1926/1927, NZ Maori embarked upon a Tour of Australia to quieten the voices of dissent.

In 1956 New Zealand played host to South Africa and for the first time the All Blacks defeated the Springboks in a test series. However the match against New Zealand Maori would erupt in debate 54 years after it was played. In 2010 during the nationwide discussion whether or not the NZRU, the South African Rugby Union, and the South African and New Zealand Governments should apologise to Maori over their roles in excluding Maori from successive All Black tours to South Africa, former player, Bishop Muru Walters declared that the then Minister of Maori Affairs, Ernest Corbett, encouraged the team to lose the game. Former New Zealand Maori Captain, All Black, and another player who took the field that day, Pat Walsh, stated in an interview:

*“...Ernest Corbett came into the dressing room. The Minister said, ‘Now listen. We don’t want any animosity between the two countries. We want to keep it quiet boys, take it easy’. Why did he come in and do the team talk? We didn’t want him”*²³.

It would seem that the Minister of Maori Affairs did speak to the team prior to kick-off and that what he did say was not well-received by the team. The final score was a 37-0 trouncing.

1960 would mark a change in the mounting criticism being targeted towards the NZRU for maintaining contact with SARB. It would give rise to a protest movement, the Citizens All Black Tour Association (CABTA), that would also serve as a precursor to future anti-apartheid organisations such as Halt All Racist Tours [HART] and Citizens Association for Racial Equality [CARE].

CABTA was formed a week before the NZRU released their official decision not to send Maori players in June, 1959, headed by prominent Wellington surgeon Rolland O'Regan. CABTA's slogan became "No Maori – No Tour" and their objective read "*To combat racial discrimination in the selection of the 1960 rugby team to tour South Africa, and to demand the abandonment of the tour if absolute equality of treatment cannot be assured*"²⁴. Chairman of the MAB, Sir Ralph Love, stated "*My presence here [at an NZRU meeting] shows that we are in favour of racial discrimination*"²⁵. President of SARB, Dr Danie Craven, inflamed the situation by commenting "*I do not think that any Maori would rate for inclusion in the 1960 New Zealand team to tour the Union. They have, in my opinion, no players who would make the grade*"²⁶. Potential players included Tiny Hill, Bill Wordley, Pat Walsh and Bill Gray. Walsh subsequently stated:

*"The Maoris were not invited to go to South Africa. And that is why Bill Gray and I were unavailable to go in 1960, because of the circumstances, we had to say we were unavailable. An invitation came from the South African Rugby Union for an all white team and it was suggested that you weren't going to be selected. So it's better to be unavailable, than say you were dumped"*²⁷.

CABTA'S public petition to Parliament had 162,000 names, making it one of the largest appeals in New Zealand's history. CABTA requested an audience with the Government and Prime Minister Walter Nash, which was granted. Sir Tipene O'Regan, son of Rolland O'Regan, would later recall that Nash commented about his father when stating "*that my father's only interest in these race relations matters was because 'his boy had a touch of the tar brush'*"²⁸. Yet their pleas to have the government intervene from having the tour proceed was ignored by Nash. The Prime Minister was good friends of the Chairman of the NZRU, Cuthbert Hogg and Nash's reasoning for not interceding was "*...it would be an act of the greatest folly and cruelty to the Maori race to allow their representatives to visit a country where colour is considered to be a mark of inferiority*"²⁹.

Despite rugby grounds being vandalised, accusations that some members of the team were in fact Maori, 3,000 people marching down Queen Street, a bomb scare on the plane that carried the All Blacks and protestors storming the runway, the tour proceeded. Again, as what occurred in 1926 and 1949, New Zealand Maori travelled to Tonga and Western Samoa to deflect any criticism that the NZRU received.

In 1965 another Springbok side toured New Zealand. A powhiri was held at Te Poho o Rawiri Marae and East Coast Maori were warned by the Member of Parliament for Northern Maori, Matiu Rata, and Sir Eruera Tirikatene, not to welcome the tourists. The latter stated:

“The very composition of their team is a visible manifestation of apartheid...It therefore seems entirely inappropriate and unnecessary to me that the President of the Maori Council should hold the view that the Maori people are in any way bound to treat the Springboks as honoured guests”³⁰.

Despite protests from Maori politicians, the welcome proceeded. The Minister of Maori Affairs, Ralph Hanan, stated at the welcome that opponents of sporting relationships with South Africa are like fleas on a dog. The Manager of the Springboks, Kobus Louw, repeatedly said throughout the tour that Maori would be welcome as a part of a proposed All Black Tour that was to be undertaken in 1967. Dr Danie Craven arrived in New Zealand three weeks prior to the end of the tour and reiterated Louw’s remarks. He went one step further and suggested that the time could come for a Bantu (a term used in South Africa for Black People) to take the field for the national squad. His comments made headlines back in South Africa and the then Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, responded to Craven’s remarks at the annual Youth Conference of the Nationalist Party at Loskop Dam by reinforcing his commitment to separate development and stating that no Maori would be allowed to come to South Africa.

At Christmas of 1965, SARB invited the All Blacks to tour under the ‘old conditions’. Prime Minister Keith Holyoake and the NZRU denounced the proposal as they believed the conditions were too harsh. Verwoerd responded by saying that the South African Government would not examine the genealogy of any player from New Zealand.

However in 1966 Verwoerd was assassinated by Dimitri Tsafendas and a known hard-line politician by the name of John Vorster replaced Verwoerd as the Prime Minister. He stipulated that he would not allow inter-racial sports within South Africa.

Vorster in early 1967 then ended a speech by emphasising that he would under no circumstances allow Maori to travel to South Africa and that on the past tours of 1928 and 1960, Maori had been members of the team. It led to a Maori witch-hunt by which former members of each tour were scrutinised to see if they had any Maori genealogy. Vorster appeared to have softened his stance later that same year. SARB held a special meeting and requested that the NZRU send their best team, regardless of race. This message was repeated by Vorster himself when he met the Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand, John Marshall, at trade talks. Yet Vorster set three conditions; one, that there should not be too many Maori players; two, that the players selected should not be 'too black', and three, that no controversy should surround their selection and dispatch. An All Black Tour to South Africa in 1970 now seemed probable. Following a failed suit at the Wellington Supreme Court to stop the tour and two All Blacks refusing to tour due to the policy of apartheid, the tour proceeded. Within the Maori community, opinion initially appeared divided. There was a younger university-educated group of Maori under the leadership of Syd Jackson that opposed the tour, in stark contrast to the older New Zealand Maori Council that was chaired by Pei Te Hurinui Jones.

Jackson opposed the tour on the following four grounds; firstly, that if the New Zealand Maori Council supported the tour, the implication would be that Maori supported apartheid; secondly, that it brings New Zealand and Maori into contempt throughout the world; thirdly, that the tour would pander to whites with no consideration of blacks; and fourthly, that for Maori players to travel as 'Honorary Whites' was an insult to Maori. As the tour drew nearer it became clear that the NZMC did not enjoy the support of the wider Maori community with the Maori Women's Welfare League and the Maori Organisation on Human Rights (MOOHR) joining other anti-tour protest groups such as CARE and HART.

Protest also became more violent with the Papakura Rugby Club stand being burned to the ground and the Auckland Rugby Union being firebombed.

When the 1970 All Blacks departed for South Africa four 'Honorary Whites' accompanied them; Maori players Sid Going, Buff Milner and Blair Furlong, along with Samoan Bryan Williams.

Six years later saw another All Black Tour of South Africa. Prior to the tour departing, an apartheid atrocity captured the attention of worldwide media. It was believed that over 1000 died in Soweto when police open fired upon a protest organised by school children regarding the teaching of the Afrikaner language in schools. The Nigerian President for the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, Abraham Ordia, flew to New Zealand and was welcomed by Kingitanga leader Dame Te Atairangikaahu. Ordia also attempted to meet with Prime Minister Robert Muldoon, whose National Party made continued rugby contact with South Africa an election promise. Muldoon refused to meet with Ordia and as a result 28 African, Asian and Caribbean countries boycotted the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games due to the stance of the New Zealand Government to play rugby against South Africa.

Muldoon would regret supporting sporting contact with South Africa, especially after the 1981 Springbok Tour of New Zealand when he reflected upon the visit as being "Our biggest mistake"³¹. Despite the National Government signing the Gleneagles Agreement of 1977 whereby all sporting contact with South Africa should have ceased, Muldoon was not prepared to stop the tour. Maori opposition had solidified since 1960 and Sir Graham Latimer as the Chairman of the NZMC stood at the powhiri at Te Poho o Rawiri Marae, Gisborne, and informed the Springboks that this welcome would be their last on a marae unless their government changed their racist policies. A strong contingent of Maori protestors targeted the New Zealand Maori-Springbok clash at McLean Park, and as was the case sixty years earlier, the game ended in a controversial 12-all draw with many believing that the drop-kick placed by Colin Beck to even the scores, had actually missed going between the goalposts. Several notable Maori players faked injuries to avoid playing the Springboks. One such player, former All Black and future NZ First Member of Parliament Tutekawa Wyllie, consequently stated:

“I did have an injury but it probably wasn’t serious enough to keep me out of the game. I was selected as a part of the 22 to play South Africa. I discussed the issues I had playing against South Africa with management at the time who made it clear that pulling out may not have been helpful with any future aspirations I may have had regarding rugby. A lot of the joy of rugby went out of it for me”³².

The 1981 Springbok Tour resulted in mass protests throughout the country, with violent encounters occurring between the protest movement and police. The Government cost of \$7.2 million dollars spent to keep protestors at bay by the police emphasised the huge cost of the tour on the country. As protest leader Donna Awatere-Huata reflected:

“The Springbok tour of 1981 was the most important six weeks of Maori history since the War. Before the tour, about half of all non-Maori New Zealanders considered racism to be abhorrent. After the tour those same people realised that what was happening in New Zealand was different in degree but not in kind from what was happening in South Africa”³³.

Rugby contact with South Africa did not reoccur until 1992 when the All Blacks took the field against the Springboks in what was dubbed ‘The Reunification Test’. Two years later New Zealand Maori were invited to participate in the M-Net Tournament that involved several South African provincial sides.

The final chapter in the saga of rugby contact with South Africa and the effect of such on Maori was last year, during the centenary celebrations of the New Zealand Maori Team when the NZRU, the South African Rugby Union and the South African Government apologised formally for the treatment Maori received. Despite calls for the New Zealand Government to admit its role and to make amends, no such apology has been forthcoming.

The, at times, implied threat to New Zealand Maori throughout the history of the ongoing relationship between the NZRU and SARB, was that the team could be disbanded on the basis of being ‘race-based’ if Maori players dissented against the decision to maintain contact with Apartheid South Africa. Terry McLean wrote:

“...Maoris were being told that if they insisted on an integrated team in 1967, this would be the end of Maori rugby as such; that shapely carrots, in the form of Maori rugby tours to Australia and Wales, were being dangled in front of Maori noses as an alternative to Maori participation in an expedition to South Africa; and that, because the expedition of 1960 was all-Pakeha, there could possibly be no exception in 1967”³⁴.

Ace Parker, a South African journalist, repeated a similar experience at the dinner following the fourth test between New Zealand and South Africa in 1965. A high-ranking NZRU official suggested that if Maori fought for inclusion into the All Blacks Team to tour South Africa in 1967, New Zealand Maori tours might be a thing of the past.

Without doubt, the treatment of successive generations of Maori players by the NZRU and New Zealand Government when it came to the question of rugby contact with South Africa was nothing short of deplorable. To suggest that New Zealand Maori is an example of apartheid is misguided. Such remarks are bereft of any consideration of the ‘power relationships’ at play when analysing Apartheid South Africa. If New Zealand Maori was an example of apartheid, the team would replace the All Blacks as our top national rugby team. That is not the case and New Zealand Maori provides another pathway forward for talented Maori rugby players.

Conclusion

To conclude this lecture, three themes have been explored as to why the New Zealand Maori Team should continue to exist. The team continues to perform the role of being ‘Ambassadors of Maori’. They represent a people who are proud of their exploits, who play a style of game they are renowned for and they continue to display the best attributes of their culture. New Zealand rugby has inherited a rich legacy due to the feats of four Maori pioneers. Between them they have introduced to the world an entertaining and compelling style of game and they have produced some of the country’s earliest literature on our national sport.

Finally, New Zealand Maori and their players have lived through the constant threat of being disestablished due to a relationship between two countries whereby one nation imposed its racist regime upon our own indigenous people. Pride, Pioneers and Prejudice remain all valid arguments when debating whether or not New Zealand Maori should continue to exist.

To you Jennifer, to the Department of Political Studies and to The University of Auckland, I wish you all the best with this lecture series that highlights the role rugby plays in New Zealand society during a year what could well provide one of the greatest moments of New Zealand sport when the All Blacks lift the William Webb Ellis Trophy for the second time in history.

¹ The bulk of this lecture is based on Malcolm Mulholland, *Beneath the Maori Moon: An Illustrated History of Maori Rugby* (Wellington: Huia, 2009).

² Matt Te Pou with Matt McLraith, *Against The Odds: Matt Te Pou and Maori Rugby* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2006) p.52.

³ Monty Soutar, *Nga Tama Toa – The Price of Citizenship: C Company 28 (Maori) Battalion 1939-1945* (Auckland: David Bateman Ltd, 2009) p.377.

⁴ P.B. Daly, The Matchless Air of Maori Rugby in *South Africa v. New Zealand Maoris*, Athletic Park, August 28th, 1965.

⁵ Interview with Tane Norton, 2006.

⁶ Michael Laws, *Gladiator – The Norm Hewitt Story* (Wellington: Darius Press, 2001) p.236.

⁷ 'Redcastle' in *N.Z. Maoris v Auckland, Eden Park* (Auckland: Auckland Rugby Union, June 18th, 1960) p.1.

⁸ Ned Parata in *Maoris and Rugby* (Hawera and Normanby Star, July 26th, 1910).

⁹ Wattie Barclay in DJC Pringle, *The New Zealand Maori Rugby Tour 1926-1927*. p.62.

¹⁰ *Maori Team Welcomed to Sydney* (Sydney Herald, 8th July, 1935).

¹¹ Rochdale Times, 20 March 1889, p.7 as quoted in Greg Ryan, *Forerunners Of The All Blacks: The 1888-1889 New Zealand Native Football Team in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1993).

¹² Sparkling Rugby (Bristol Times and Mirror, 19th October, 1926) in WT Parata: *Album of Maori Rugby Football Team Tour Overseas 1926-1927*, MS-1262, Hocken Library, Dunedin.

¹³ <http://stats.allblacks.com/asp/profile.asp?ABID=832>. Last visited 24.07.2011.

¹⁴ Paul Dobson, *Rugby's Greatest Rivalry: South Africa vs. New Zealand 1921-1995* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1996). p.15.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Terry McLean, *Great Days in New Zealand Rugby* (Auckland: Fontana Silver Fern, 1976). p.26.

¹⁷ Richard Thompson, *Retreat From Apartheid: New Zealand's Sporting Contacts with South Africa*, (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1975) p.14.

¹⁸ Interview with Kiwi Blake, 2006.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Kingi Tahiwī, Christchurch Press, 2nd September 1948 in *Retreat From Apartheid: New Zealand's Sporting Contacts with South Africa*. p.15.

²¹ Ned Parata, New Zealand Herald, 9th August, 1948 in *Retreat From Apartheid: New Zealand's Sporting Contact with South Africa*, p.15.

²² Sir Eruera Tirikatene, Christchurch Press, 2nd September 1948 in Trevor Richards, *Dancing On Our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1999) p.16.

²³ Interview with Pat Walsh, 2006.

²⁴ 'No Maoris, No Tour': *New Zealand Protests 1959-60*. The Case for CABTA – Citizens All Black Tour Association (New Zealand Freelance) 6.

²⁵ Paul Dobson, *Rugby's Greatest Rivalry: South Africa vs. New Zealand, 1921-1995*, p.34.

²⁶ Richard Thompson, *Retreat From Apartheid – New Zealand's Sporting Contacts with South Africa*, p.21.

²⁷ Interview with Pat Walsh, 2006.

²⁸ Hineani Melbourne, *Maori Sovereignty: The Maori Perspective* (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1995) p.154.

²⁹ Finlay MacDonald, *The Game Of Our Lives*, p.89.

³⁰ Sir Eruera Tirikatene, Evening Post, 5th May, 1965 in Trevor Richards, *Dancing On Our Bones – New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism*. p.31.

³¹ Ed. Ron Palenski. *Between The Posts – A New Zealand Rugby Anthology* (Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989) p.101.

³² Interview with Tutekawa Wyllie, 2006.

³³ Donna Awatere-Huata, *My Journey* (Seaview Press, 1996) p.1996) p.74.

³⁴ Terry McLean, New Zealand Herald, 25th September 1965 in Richard Thompson, *Retreat From Apartheid – New Zealand's Sporting Contacts with South Africa*, p.79.