

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10.00 P.M. MONDAY 6 APRIL 1998

**INTRODUCTION TO PROFESSOR KENNETH MINOGUE
AT THE LAUNCHING OF**

WAITANGI, MORALITY AND REALITY

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**WELLINGTON
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WAITANGI, MORALITY AND REALITY

It is my very pleasant task to set the scene for our proceedings this evening and to introduce our guest speaker, Professor Kenneth Minogue.

The launching of his book *Waitangi, Morality and Reality* is an important event for the Business Roundtable.

For many years people have urged us to take an interest in Treaty issues as part of our role of undertaking research and contributing to public debate.

For a long time we had little difficulty resisting such overtures. We have got into enough trouble over the years by taking on a range of controversial issues. And none come more sensitive or controversial than the Treaty of Waitangi.

It is not as though we have ignored Maori issues. To the contrary, we feel that much of the work we have done on the economy, the labour market, education and welfare has a direct bearing on the future well-being of Maori – whose interests are disproportionately harmed by an under-performing economy and poor social policies.

As New Zealanders, we have surely all been heartened by the Maori renaissance of the last 15 years – in the economy, education, politics, art and business. We have been delighted to welcome two Maori chief executives running major businesses as members of the Business Roundtable. And we have built up an extensive network of contacts with Maori and worked with them on many issues – from producer boards to conservation.

We see the future well-being of Maori as fundamentally dependent on the things that will determine the well-being of the whole community – productive businesses, jobs, skills, and strong and cohesive families and communities.

We do not see real long-term solutions to problems of social disadvantage in redistributive policies or resource endowments – history indicates they offer no secure road to social or material progress. They risk diverting and

postponing the efforts needed to make progress in the modern world of international economic competition and cultural adaptation.

But that is not to deny the quite separate rationale of the Waitangi process as a mechanism for confronting past injustices, satisfying legitimate claims and restoring Maori pride and national unity. My view is that it was desirable for these things to be brought out into the open and dealt with, but that there are also grave risks if the process is not clearly led, managed and completed. The tragedies of countries like Northern Ireland or Sri Lanka did not happen by design, and they stand as a warning that attempts to remedy past tragedies can be a recipe for continuing and future division.

So ultimately we were prevailed upon to take a specific interest in the Waitangi process.

We did so partly because we felt that a sense of balance and direction was lacking. And as with some of New Zealand's other constitutional adventures such as the Bill of Rights Act and MMP, New Zealand academics and lawyers have been prominent players, and some parties with a major stake in the outcome have not been closely involved.

The elements of morality in the Waitangi process, on which academics and lawyers tend to focus, are seemingly clear enough. What looked to us to be missing were certain elements of reality. Unless these are brought squarely into the equation, the hopes of an acceptable and enduring settlement are bound to be dashed. Realism about the limited benefits of a focus on past problems may underlie the biblical injunction to let the dead bury the dead.

The Waitangi process is quintessentially a political process – it is not one that is ultimately capable of being resolved in courts of law.

To throw light on it, we therefore looked around for a person with deep understanding and wisdom in the subject of politics. We were fortunate a couple of years ago to attract the interest of Professor Minogue.

Ken Minogue was born in New Zealand and grew up here, but his career as a practitioner in political philosophy has been abroad, largely at the

London School of Economics. He has a very distinguished academic record, with many books, articles and contributions to public affairs to his credit.

As Sir Peter Tapsell remarks in the foreword to the book, there are advantages in being able to review the Waitangi process from a distance, and setting it in the context of indigenous rights movements elsewhere. But over the two years in which the book has been in preparation, Professor Minogue has also got to grips with the writings, judgments and issues in the New Zealand debate, and has had generous help from many of those closely involved with it.

One aspect of the brief to Professor Minogue was to assess the Waitangi process and point the way forward in a way that any fair-minded New Zealander – Maori or non-Maori – could relate to and respond: ‘Yes, that makes sense’.

My own view – but this is for others to judge – is that he has answered this brief with great sensitivity and insight, and has produced a book which will be a reference point in the debate in the years ahead.

Ladies and gentlemen, on your behalf I warmly welcome Professor Kenneth Minogue and invite him to speak to us about his book *Waitangi, Morality and Reality*.