

**Trevor Mallard Political Hero**  
**Daniel McCaffrey November 2004**

In politics cowardice is always a mistake.

Running away from a problem because dealing with it would cost the votes of a bloc of supporters just postpones the day of reckoning.

The craven obeisance to power one sees when the lowest dog in the pack licks the neck of its leader just leads to abject surrender.

On the Treaty of Waitangi New Zealand has suffered from political cowardice for over thirty years. It's that long since the a politician had the courage to say to New Zealanders that they were equal citizens in one country.

Jim Bolger did, briefly. Palmer, Moore, Lange, Shipley and Clark have never said it.

In a world full of political despotism it was once a shining glory of New Zealand was a democracy, all our citizens had equal rights before the law.

Our soldiers fought with courage in all the wars abroad to preserve democracy in New Zealand - forever.

With political cowardice rampant Trevor Mallard's speech "We Are All New Zealanders Now" in July was courageous.

Trevor Mallard actually said that the Treaty of Waitangi gave no group in New Zealand greater rights than another. Not the tangata whenua, not the indigenous people of Aotearoa, not the first nation people , not the tāngata tiriti people. No Mallard said that we are all equal as citizens.

The question is why is it courageous to say that we are all equal? How did we get into this mess? How did democratic New Zealanders ever come to believe that people from one race had more rights than people from another race?

People like myself who argued for "affirmative action" in the 1970's have to carry some of the blame.

If some people seem handicapped in the social mobility stakes it was a beguilingly simple idea to give aid and assistance to those far back.

We were wrong. “Positive” racism is still racism. The genie of groupism was let out of the lamp. Citizens were no longer fellow citizens bound in the same nation but competing blocks and groups all deserving special treatment, uplifting from oppression, and government favours.

Race not need became the creed. It was the plunge into the abyss of racism and group preference.

Not only was affirmative action, an ingredient in the toxic recipe, but black power thinking was misunderstood and blithely imported from America.

Frantz Fanon's concepts on colonialism, relevant for his age were added to the brew. Indigenous rights drifted in from the third world.

And if this pot pōuri of fuzzy “special rights” lunacy was not enough add to the witches brew, Jaques Derriada’s clownish destruction of the meaning of reality and Gramsci’s sulphurous Marxism.

When this mixture of historical grievance and blatant opportunism had fermented to an explosive political powder keg along comes the incomprehensible political stupidity of Lord Cooke and Geoffrey Palmer and bestows upon the country the “principles of the Treaty of Waitangi”.

A trendy judicially active judges and the deluded foggery of the academics did the rest.

That is how in the space of twenty years we became a country where race counts in the line up for government handouts and why set against that onslaught and self righteous grab for privilege Trevor Mallard's statement is a courageous one.

He agrees with the late Dr Micheal King that

“just because one group has been here longer than another does not make its members more New Zealand than later arrivals. Nor does it give them the right to exclude others from full participation in national life.”

It is the most affirming statement on New Zealand’ democracy heard from any Minister since the days of Norman Kirk.

Saying “we are all equal” is the sort of easy remark that any British or Canadian or Australian politician might make.

But in New Zealand because we have not affirmed the equality of our citizenship and the nature of our democracy for decades telling the citizens they have equal rights and that no race or group is to be preferred over another is strong stuff.

Trevor tries valiantly to address the question of preferential rights “principles of the treaty”.

“Maori have no extra rights or privileges under the treaty of Waitangi or in the policy of the New Zealand government. “

That’s plain enough for anyone to understand.

The Government hopes that a cascade of propaganda explaining the “principles” of the treaty will change peoples minds on equal rights. It will not. The people far too perfectly understand ruination of state preference for one race over another.

Mallards is more sensible saying we could build a New Zealand appreciating our differences, enjoying them in his words and “becoming a positive go-ahead future looking nation.”

And all New Zealanders can take up enjoy and affirm the courage, valour, culture and world of the Maori imagination without becoming tenants in a tyranny of racial rights and privileges.

Long ago in the 60’s I travelled Australia the United States and Great Britain and discovered the real racism of the time. It was an evil much the same as the vile bigotry I was born into. I gloried that I was from New Zealand where there was no racism.

Now I find the corrosive acids of racial preference, affirmative action, group determined privilege is fostering division and hatred.

There is talk of civil war. Chris Trotter, the learned Kenneth Minogue and Margaret Motu have all raised the spectre in recent times.

Alas Mallard's speech has been greeted by a resounding silence in government.

No minister has shown a shred of support for his views.

Mallard might be brave but the sense of cowardice elsewhere is palpable.

For the government to follow Mallard's line would entail principle and courage. But it could alienate a labour interest group. It could cost an election.

Expecting it from a Cabinet formed to create and protect group rights and affirm the privileges bestowed on the new aristocracy is asking a bit much.

They are the creatures of a profoundly undemocratic selection system. They relish division and privilege for minorities.

So long as these are firmly cemented into law that is all that matters.

Political courage is the rarest thing

Don't hold your breath.

The speech is here

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/we-are-all-new-zealanders-now>