

TURANGAWAEWAE!

FOR THOSE living in the age of affluence all is not well. True, most New Zealanders wishing to do so, can progress from car to house to swimming pool to boat to second car to caravan to second house. But all too frequently the fruits of the spirit evade us. And in the rush to get from the first car to the second house much else is lost. Our environment is despoiled, wildlife is destroyed, suburban neurosis becomes a common occurrence in dormitory suburbs, the nuclear family gives little support in times of crisis and the giant corporations and the bureaucracy wax and grow fat while the individualist and the small man wither away.

So some thoughtful young people have been looking for alternative forms of society. They firmly reject the US system as a model, as it seems merely to have travelled further along the road New Zealand is already on. They also reject Russia and China, where the power of the state is all-pervasive, and the opportunity to do one's own thing is conspicuously absent.

Understandably, in a multi-cultural society, these people turned

BETTY NOBLE reports from New Zealand on how the ancient spirit of the Maoris is shaping the policies of a modern political party.

their attention to the Maori and his ways. They found that in Maoritanga there was a multi-age-group society where there was room for the young and for the old, where women had position and influence, where the tribe gave a sense of worth and belonging, and they found *turangawaewae*.

Although a reasonable translation of *turangawaewae* is that each person has need of a place for his feet, the spirit of *turangawaewae* is much more than that. It includes an almost religious reverence for the environment, a recognition of the need to husband natural resources, and a respect for the rights of all living things to life.

All these attitudes have been embodied in the land and social policies of the Values Party.

THIS QUOTATION from *Economics of the New Zealand Maori* by Raymond Firth illustrates the Maoris feelings for the land: "In considering the economic aspect of the Maori system of land holding it is essential, then,

to examine in addition the non-economic factors involved. The Maori had a great respect for land *per se*, and an exceedingly strong affection for his ancestral soil, a sentiment by no means to be correlated only with its fertility and immediate value to him as a source of food. The lands whereon his forefathers lived, fought, and were buried were ever to him an object of the deepest feeling. "Noku te whenua, o ohu tupuna"—'mine is the land, the land of my ancestors' was his cry. This deep rooted affection received expression in a number of ways. . . ."

Many remembered sayings about land bear out these views. The saying of a captured chief, for instance—"Send me a handful of soil that I may weep over it," and such proverbs as: "people die, are slain, migrate, disappear; not so the land, which ever remaining," and "I greet my only surviving parent in the world, the land."

The Maori, however, never owned land in the European sense, rather he had rights in it. A Maori *hapu* (extended family) might have the right to snare birds in a particular tree, or the right to fish in a certain part of a stream, or a right to have *whares* (homes)



◆Denied access to the land which had sustained their forefathers, young Maoris protest at their involuntary unemployment

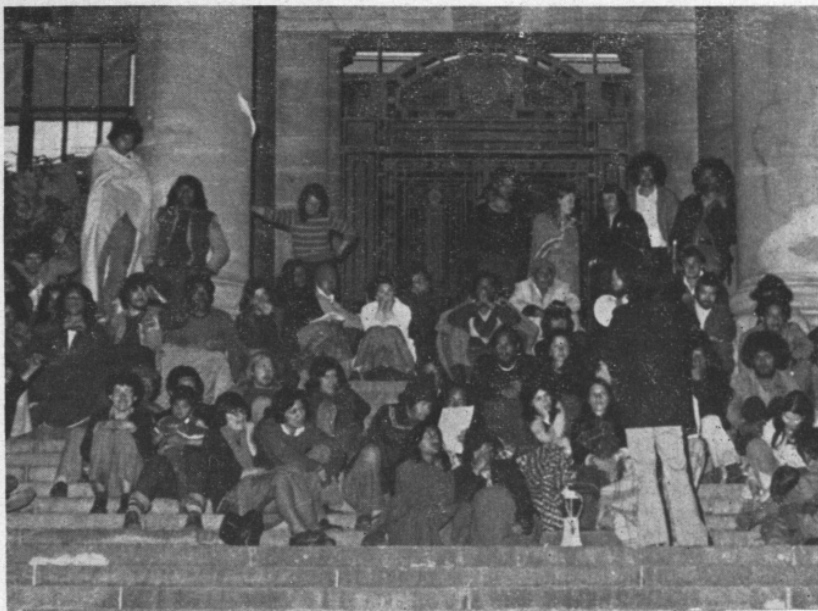
Photos courtesy of "Dominion", Wellington

ECOLOGY A

UNLIKE most ecology-oriented organisations, the Values Party has developed its thinking on key problems such as landownership.

The report produced by the party's Land & Capital Policy Working Group (1978) concludes that "the land tax proposal once properly working, can be expected to so change the situation as to make what appears now to be an urgent need something that recedes in importance because there is much greater access to land for those who really want it."

The Working Group unanimously accepted the primacy of the essential spiritual bond between land and the people who regard it as home—the Maori concept of *Turangawaewae*. And so, on land



◆Maoris demonstrate on the steps of New Zealand's Parliament Buildings about the loss of their traditional land rights.

in a certain place. A Maori tribe would claim rights only over land they actually used and there were no absentee owners. No rent was paid.

The challenge for the Values Party is to hold fast to the principles of *turangawaewae* — the rights of every member of society to land, the importance of conservation and the rights of all living creatures to an environment in which they can survive—and at the same time fit them to a policy applicable to today's conditions, geared to a much higher standard of consumption than the Maori ever enjoyed.

The proposals they have come

up with are for a much strengthened regional and local government structure, financed from a tax on land values; a much less powerful central government, and a decrease in income tax.

The Values Party recognizes that our strong central government, with its all-embracing powers of control, is destroying our traditional values by denying individuals the opportunity to adopt a life-style suitable to them and by alienating most of us through our inability to influence decisions which deeply concern us.

As a first step, a Values government would relieve all farmers of income tax in return for their pay-

ing a factor tax on land. This would be assessed on a reasonable estimate of the land's production potential. The need for frequent reassessments is understood and endorsed. (Too infrequent assessment of land values in New Zealand and Australia have done much to discredit site value rating.)

VALUES, refreshingly, recognizes that rights must always be balanced by appropriate duties. It spells these out in relation to land. It recognizes that the individual and group have rights to security of tenure, that they have a duty to pay the economic rent and any other legal charges on the land, and to keep the land in good heart. Values also recognizes that the community has rights in land and in addition to the collection of economic rent, proposes comprehensive town and country planning at regional and local levels. It is highly probable that in this country, with its low population density, there would in fact be little conflict over land use, once there was a substantial tax on land values.

The election in November did not result in a good vote for Values.

However, Values people recognize that their work is educational as well as political. They are not disturbed by being called idealists.

Why not work for ideals, they say.

ND THE 'RADICAL' LAND TAX PLAN

tenure, the report declares:

"It is important to note that *turangawaewae* strikes a basically different direction from traditional Judeo-Christian (European) attitudes to land, that it is not tied to individual ownership and use; and that it does not prohibit against improvement."

In rejecting alternative solutions, the report offers as its statement on goals on land tenure:

- (a) absolute ownership of land by individuals is inherently impossible;
- (b) rights include security of tenure and the right to bequeath tenure within the family or group;
- (c) responsibilities include the payment of rates, taxes or rents to the community.

The report declares that "Because

of the basic importance of *turangawaewae*, Values in general opposes nationalisation, i.e. central government appropriating the rights and responsibilities of tenure."

A Values Government would seek to eliminate absentee ownership of productive land by limiting titles to those normally resident or working on it.

In common with other countries, New Zealand land prices have escalated faster than wages and retail prices. This fact is regarded as "the crucial land issue of our time." As a result of it, young people could not afford to buy homes or farms. "We're seeing the evolution of a new feudalism in New Zealand. The barons and nobles of old are replaced by (multi-national) comp-

anies and a wealthy landed class..."

But these land values were a social surplus, and the Working Group rejected price controls and betterment levies in favour of a high tax on market-determined land values, which does not require new bureaucracies or interference with tenure.

The tax on land values is characterised as radical, for it tied in with other goals—the redistribution of wealth, decentralisation of social services and the promotion of ecology. It respected diversity and liberty, and restrained the rise of land prices while encouraging productive use of land and would permit a reduction of taxes on earnings.