

Address to ILO
Monday 5th June 2006-
Palais de Nations
Geneva
Sharon Clair

Vice President Maori New Zealand Council of Trade Unions

Thank you Mr President and distinguished representatives I join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your appointment.

I seek the indulgence of the plenary to begin with a greeting in my language the indigenous language of New Zealand 'Maori' and then I will continue in English for the rest of my address.

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou Katoa

Tena koutou Katoa e nga mana

E nga iwi

E nga reo

e nga karangatanga maha o nga hau e wha, tenei te mihi atu ki a koutou katoa, kia tau te rangimarie ki a koutou no Tangata Maori o Aotearoa

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou Katoa

Greetings to the Natural World and Greetings to you all from the Workers, Government and Employers of the New Zealand Delegation, and also from the indigenous people of New Zealand the Maori. It is truly an honour and privilege for me to stand here as an indigenous woman of New Zealand and as the first Maori Vice President of the NZ Council of Trade Unions to share beliefs, concerns and of course our connections to environment.

I pay homage to all those who throughout history have done so much to promote and defend the rights of working women and men, create social justice and fight for equality, human rights and democracy.

They have taught us that Trade Unions play a vital role in ensuring that we must continue to create a tomorrow that our grand children will value. This involves keeping this planet alive; looking after each other and our natural resources. It means workers must mobilise by applying a rights based approach that integrates the environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development.

Trade Unions understand the desire to create a sustainable world. And we understand that Sustainability is not just about how we use natural resources. It is also about our societal structures and relationships with each other.

Maori people understand our duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. To do this we must have keen and unhurried thinking which resides in good heart. The sacredness of this is respect. The choices we make affect our evolutionary process. If we live unconsciously we evolve unconsciously, if we live consciously we evolve consciously. Once again peoples of the world come together at the ILO to share our thinking which will become the things we do, the things we do will become our character and our character will become our destiny.

The ILO's evolving consciousness demonstrates global leadership in good heart. Commitment to the Decent Work Agenda is paramount to good heart evolution.

Work is one of the most important avenues by which we

Come to know ourselves as a person

Work is the place and the activity in which we spend most of our waking lives and must align with our sense of ourselves as individuals and as members of our communities and environments to achieve our aspirations.

It is important to work together to achieve unity and purpose

To co operate, to relate to one another in meaningful ways. The ILO leads the world in this through tripartism.

I am proud to be able to say that in New Zealand whilst we still have much work to do we promote an active approach to social and economic development committing ourselves to partnerships and promoting change that leads to greater prosperity for all in Aotearoa and the Pacific.

A major priority for workers in New Zealand is supporting joint union campaigns to increase wages, end low pay and improve training and skills and investment in people because workers want a fair go to decent work to achieve an end to poverty.

The war against children must end. Our young need to be able to have freedom from poverty so that they can be the leaders we will need tomorrow. Poverty and impoverishment must end so that a strong, healthy, dynamic workforce can blossom.

In conclusion then I would like to share a message from a very wise Maori priest the Rev Maori Marsden who said

“ Man is the conscious mind of Mother Earth and plays a vital part in the regulation of her life support system and man’s duty is to enhance and sustain those systems”¹

Therefore, all workers, all employers and all government members of the ILO let us re affirm our comitment to a living planet where decent work is enjoyed by everyone.

Thankyou for your attention.

¹ (2003), Maori Marsden, The Woven Universe Selected Writings of Rev.Maori Marsden,: The Estate of Rev. Maori Marsden Te Wananga o Raukawa ,Otaki