

Section 5.22: The Rainbow Warrior

A short analogy that should appeal to most New Zealanders.

Well here I am at the end of this chapter, so it's time to spot the odd one out. What on earth has the Rainbow Warrior got to do with Māori/Pākehā issues? The answer is absolutely nothing, and that is why I have mentioned it. I was not inspired by any book to introduce this topic. This is completely my own doing. It has absolutely nothing to do with anything I have said. Consequently it can be used as a useful and completely separate analogy for one of the main points of this chapter, and, indeed, the whole book. Am I off my rocker then? No. I'm being perfectly serious. Let me explain.

First of all, for the benefit of non-New Zealanders and those who are too young to remember or register this event, let me summarise the details.¹ It all began in 1985. The French were conducting nuclear weapons testing in the South Pacific. Greenpeace were protesting about this and were about to sail their ship, the Rainbow Warrior, to the test site. In July this ship was anchored in the Auckland Harbour when agents of the French secret service came along, planted a bomb, and sunk the ship. One person on board was killed. Not long afterwards, two French agents were caught in New Zealand and convicted for this offence in a New Zealand court. They were sentenced to ten years imprisonment. In retaliation, the French government threatened to block New Zealand's exports to Europe unless the pair were released. The affair went to the United Nations, the end result of which was that New Zealand had to hand over these two to French custody on a military base in the Pacific. In return, the French were required to pay New Zealand compensation and 'apologise'. Despite the 'apology' the French pair were back in France by 1988. I seem to recall that the New Zealand press reported they were even greeted by a heroes' welcome.

Grrr!! I can feel the blood boiling. I can sense New Zealanders' blood boiling too. 'It is an act of war', my father said at the time. Injustice! Unfair! Especially in today's climate of the 'Global War on Terrorism'. This was state supported terrorism. Just imagine if it had been now. Just imagine if it had been a Muslim country. Just imagine if it had been committed on a big country. Just imagine. It would've been placed in the 'Axis of Evil'. It might even have been invaded and the government overthrown.

But it wasn't. Instead perpetrator was a big country—and a 'good' 'Christian' one at that. The recipient was a small country. The big country only had to pay a bit of money and 'apologise'. Mrs (now Baroness) Thatcher, the then Prime Minister of the UK, refused to condemn the action at the time... Grr, grr, grr, grr, grrrrrrrrr!!!

Are New Zealander readers sufficiently worked up now into a state of righteous anger and indignation? We won't forget this, will we? We won't forget this injustice. And non-New Zealanders, yes this did happen. These are the bare facts that even the French don't deny.

I have been to France many times since living in the UK. I now have friends in France. Each time I go there I am aware of this indignation. I have talked to some of these friends about the Rainbow Warrior affair. They certainly weren't going to bring the topic up if I hadn't mentioned it. But, if I insisted on talking about it, yes, it was a bad business. Shameful even. But, (with the typical French way of shrugging the shoulders), *c'est la vie*, that's life. It's over and done with now. It's all in the past. Oh well, let's talk about something else.

In other words, it doesn't register very highly on their scheme of things. And these are highly educated people. What about the bulk of France who are not in that category? Do they even know about the Rainbow Warrior affair? If so, do they even think it was a 'bad business'?

The moral of the story is that the small guy who has been thumped remembers the pain and injustice of that thump for a long time. By contrast, for the big guy it's just one of many thumps, that is, if it is a thump at all, and not just the normal way of swinging one's arms around in the world. The thump is soon forgotten, brushed aside, played down, and ignored. The big guy won't even want to consider he's done something wrong, because that might involve admitting that he really has—even if only to himself. According to him,

¹ More information may be found in Michael King's *Death of the Rainbow Warrior*.

just thinking about the possibility of being in the wrong would be a sign of weakness and bring him down in size closer to that of the small guy.

Spot the connection with Māori/Pākehā issues now?

I have argued extensively in this book for Pākehā to think again when considering these issues. I have thrown facts, quotes, careful argument, emotive argument, and even a couple of poems at the reader. In doing so, I have opened my soul up. I have displayed my passion, my sadness, my joy, my surprise... It's all there in the pages. I have therefore opened myself up to criticism. I have opened myself up to being put in a box—over-sensitive, bookish, idealistic, out of touch... whatever. I'm sure there are plenty of other possibilities. And once I'm placed in a safe box, it then becomes so easy to dismiss me and therefore everything I've said.

Fine, let the reader do that. But just remember the story of the Rainbow Warrior. Just remember what it feels like to be the little guy at the whim of the big guy. Remember how the little guy recalls every detail of every injustice, while the big guy doesn't even want to know or care.

And remember there is another way to view the world than from the standpoint of dominance.