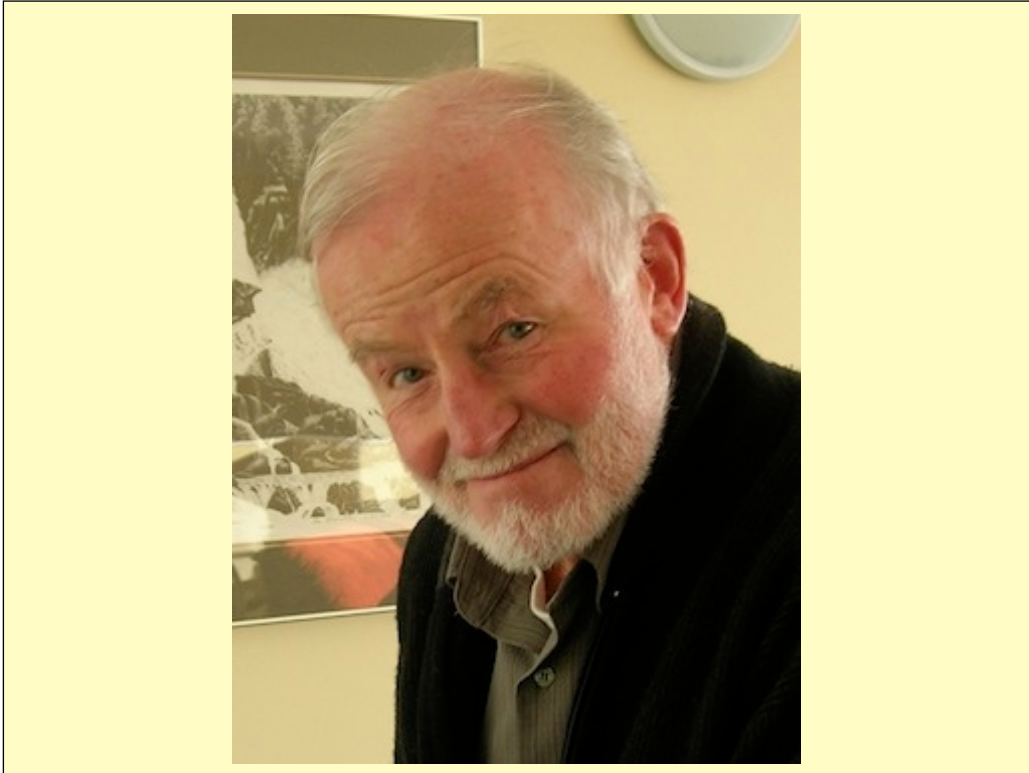


# Father Terry Dibble



Pacific people were among hundreds of mourners who packed St Patrick's Cathedral in Auckland on Wednesday to honour a gentle but feisty man who served as a priest for more than 50 years.

Terence Dibble, 78, or Terry, as everyone knew him, advocated for Pacific people as part of a large number of social justice issues he was involved in. As a member of the Timor Lorosae Support Group, he worked towards independence for East Timor. Terry was involved in many projects to relieve poverty there. The group took a herd of 50 cattle to East Timor to enhance the local breed of cattle. They sent four container loads of water pumps. Another project provided sewing machines and start-up funds for widows to create work such as weaving to support their families. A recent initiative he worked on was providing resources for more than 100 children at Topu Honis Orphanage. Most of the children are not orphans but have nowhere else to go because their families cannot support them.

In support of a nuclear-free Pacific, he joined the Peace Squadron flotilla of small boats in protests against nuclear warships in Waitemata Harbour. Terry had a great love of sailing and was a part-owner and skipper of the trimaran, Moananui. He was also a member of the Philippines Solidarity Network of Aotearoa/NZ which speaks out on issues such as human rights abuses.

Terry celebrated Mass for prisoners at the Auckland Regional Remand Prison on a regular basis and many of the men he saw there were from Pacific backgrounds. Young Pacific men were helped through his long involvement with Betty Wark and Ngāti Arohanui Trust. Betty Wark worked with disadvantaged Māori youth, especially street kids, who needed a supportive environment and a chance to get on their feet. The trust often included young Pakeha and Pacific youth.

Before he died, Terry helped to set up a new organisation called the Mana Pride Trust, with the help of some leading lawyers and judges in Auckland, to carry on this work. It was one of his greatest passions even in the final weeks of his life. He hoped the trust would help young people coming out of jail to find their own worth, gain skills for employment and reestablish themselves in society.

Terry was a member of a formidable number of organisations including Corso, CARE, HART, the Manurewa Food Coop, Otara Labour Coop, Ponsonby Work Trust, Kauri Trust, Tenants Protection Association and the Peoples' Centre Trust.

He is often remembered for the way he negotiated with the Police Commissioner, Bob Walton, at Hamilton in 1981 when the Springbok game was disrupted by protesters. Many of the protesters believe they escaped serious injury, or even death, at the hands of angry rugby supporters because of Terry's intervention on that day to help protesters to leave the field in relative safety. He worked closely with the Hawke whanau in their claim to the Waitangi Tribunal for return of land at Takaparawhau for Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei. This tireless fighter for justice was arrested and charged at Waitangi in 1982 for disrupting an official church service by asking people 'to pray for the indigenous people of New Zealand'. He defended the charge and it was dismissed.

When people came together at St Paul's in Grey Lynn two days before Terry's funeral to reflect on all that he had done, it was the 'little' things about him that resonated most strongly with his friends and others who knew him. John Minto, who could have talked about his long association with Terry through their anti-apartheid activities, instead mentioned a 'small' thing that meant a great deal. When his family lost a beloved cat of about 20 years, Terry came to their home and blessed the grave.

*Father Terry Dibble, Pacific champion of those who struggled*  
Obituary by Carol Archie, 29 April 2011

Freire told me that he was influenced by Young Christian Workers (YCW) in South America. YCW emerged originally from Belgium after World War One. It was founded by Joseph Cardijn<sup>1</sup> to assist young workers in very oppressive working situations to analyse their working situations using biblical texts to help elucidate their understanding. They were then encouraged to take action to try to change their situations. It was based on a model of ‘see, judge and act.’ You get the facts of the situation and analyse what action might be taken. You then encourage people to take action; then to reflect on the action they have taken; then deepen their reflection and so on.<sup>2</sup>

What happened in other parts of the world though was that YCW members moved away from that ‘see, judge and act’ model. They used some parts of it but it was not employed to help young workers as such. So YCW became a movement of a variety of Catholic youth—doing scriptural work and some assessment to do with moral issues and that sort of thing. They tended to do quite a lot of social activities.

Every four years the International YCW would meet and establish a programme for the ensuing four years. Around about 1965 they met, I think in Bangkok, and the programme for the next four years was ‘leisure time.’ In the ensuing four years though the South American Young Christian Workers developed its application of the ‘see, judge and act’ model and this had a considerable influence on liberation theology.

So out of that context liberation theology arose, and liberation theologians became a thorn in the side of the Catholic Church. When I met Freire I knew that liberation theology was a different approach from the classical European theology. I didn’t know how much theology Freire knew so I asked him about the distinction between the classical theology of Europe and liberation theology. He talked for about half an hour—not only did he know a lot about liberation theology but also he knew a considerable number of liberation theologians personally. He was very well informed.

*So were you already interested in these approaches before encountering Freire?*

What happened was that in 1969 the International YCW met and came under the influence of the Latin American participants. They attempted to get back the original initiative of Cardijn and the original approach, which was strengthened by liberation theology. People came to Aotearoa talking about that approach and I could see its value, but what they didn’t give us was the tools to help change—an educational method to help change people from the easy-going approach to something much more connected to the lives of the young people we were dealing with. We, some of the chaplains and some of the leaders in the YCW, could see the validity of their ideas. We took up the challenge

---

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.cijoc.org/page/joseph-cardijn-and-three-truths>

<sup>2</sup> For more about YCW and their work see: <http://www.cijoc.org/page/young-christian-workers-ycw>

to raise consciousness but we lacked the pedagogical equipment to deal with it—to try to translate it into a way of dealing with a parish youth group and a recalcitrant chaplain and all that. We tried to do all this in our parish groups and didn't do a very good job of it, but it was an introduction to taking some sort of action at grassroots level.

It was not entirely disastrous but in the end the YCW collapsed in this country. There were a number of reasons for the collapse but not having practical ways of working certainly contributed to it. Though there is now a lot of evidence that the seeds we sowed then have in fact borne a lot of fruit. There are people still involved in the political struggle who were part of that process in those days—people like Paul Tolich in the Engineers Union, Tony Ryall and Alf Kirk—quite a number who are active in political terms and that's where they learned.

*When did you meet Freire?*

I was present in 1974 when Freire came to Auckland Grammar School to speak. I can't recall his name but it was an Indian guy who invited a wide spectrum of people to the meeting. What was interesting was that Freire refused to speak and would not get involved in the discussion at the meeting. We were working on some issues in groups with plenaries and so on and towards end of day Donna Awatere blasted the Pākehā people present. We were mostly Pākehā grassroots people and Donna was very emotional and articulate and challenged us as Pākehā. It wasn't just Donna—Titewhai Harawira spoke powerfully as well. We were stunned because we hadn't grasped that Māori were oppressed—and then we were shattered.

Later that night some unknown people broke into the school hall and removed the tape from the video that was being made of the event and so there is no record of it. On Sunday morning we couldn't get back into the venue because the police were searching the place. After this Freire was prevailed upon to speak because of the tension at the meeting. And he did speak for maybe 20 minutes. He emphasised the idea that grassroots people must have the chance to express the experience of oppression.

*Contextual theology was central to Freire's approach, can you talk about that?*

Contextual theology is a method of theologising that starts from the experience of the people doing the theology. Liberation theology is basically contextual theology in the South American context. So you'll have contextual theology here in New Zealand that will use the same principles—but the application is different because the circumstances are different. At the Catholic Institute of Theology (now within the School of Theology connected with Auckland University) we pursued contextual theology under the guidance of Neil Darrough.

Contextual theology starts with the experience of the people and as you begin to analyse that experience, you then draw on the scriptural narratives to help understand the

situation you are in, and to help evolve a theology that leads you towards an understanding of a relationship with your neighbour and with God. Classical theology starts with God and you work your way down, so they really are quite contrary theological approaches. The Vatican favours the classical type and has great difficulty with contextual theology.

My experience was, for instance, standing up at Bastion Point defending the claim of Ngāti Whātua to that land and saying to myself, ‘Dibble, do you really know why you’re here?’ I looked back to the theology that I was taught in the seminary to help me understand, ‘Why am I here?’ and I found nothing. But I looked to liberation theology and said, ‘Yes, I’m here because these people have a rightful claim to this land which has been unjustly taken off them. And if the reign of God is going to prevail in Tāmaki Makaurau then it will prevail if this land gets back to these people because otherwise this is a falsehood.’

In all that I’ve done I’ve used that approach, and so have cemented myself in an understanding of that type of theology. As John Curnow<sup>3</sup> said, ‘Social analysis doesn’t make converts. It helps people who are already engaged to understand the elements of the struggle they are engaged in.’ Therefore if you weren’t actually engaged in the struggle structural analysis really had very little meaning.

*You referred to social analysis. Is that another name for structural analysis?*

As far as I know the terms are entirely interchangeable except that I think structural analysis gives you a better indication of what this method of analysis is about.

Filip Fanchette came in mid 1970s; he visited several times between 1977 and 1982. Michael Elliott from the National Council of Churches issued the invitations to workshops. I was invited and we gathered at Palmerston North from all over the country. The workshop was based on the Freirean model in that the participants do the work and the tutor helps them build the process of analysis. What derived out of that was that some people really understood that social analysis was about people engaged in the struggle. Activists have to be looking for solutions. For example, the Māori land march in 1975 broke the issue of racism in this country. Until then the Pākehā Left had ignored racism here—it was specifically seen as a Māori problem and we weren’t involved in it. The march began the process of getting it on the agenda for the whole country and that was taken further by the fiasco on Bastion Point.

---

<sup>3</sup> John Curnow, a West Coast-born priest of the Christchurch diocese, well-known for his work on behalf of the poor and under-privileged.

*What about the feminist struggle?*

Filip Fanchette and other churchmen involved in social analysis were not supporters of feminism—it wasn't that Filip was opposed to it but that he wasn't engaged in it. The way in which structural analysis was presented to us by Filip didn't include reference to the feminist struggle at all. It was presented to us on an economic basis—therefore women were either poor or not poor and fell in with class. If you wanted to look at the feminist question it needed to be from a cultural base and Filip didn't do that. Some women advanced some of these thoughts and it didn't fall within the parameters. Also among liberation theologians it wasn't seen as an issue either because liberation theology evolved from an economic rather than a cultural base. The same issue came up in terms of racism except that Māori fell into the category of 'poor' so they weren't excluded. The women's movement didn't operate from the basis of the poor so they were different. One of Fanchette's visits was around the time of Bastion Point, in 1978. A number of Māori really grasped onto the analysis—Rebecca Evans and others really embraced it. I can remember being with Filip Fanchette up at Auckland Hospital—we were using the nurses' facilities to run this seminar—and I saw Rebecca walking along the street so went out and said to her, 'Come and meet this fellow.' I immediately felt this rapport between Rebecca and Fanchette.

It was an aggressive time because Māori had been oppressed for so long and were now beginning to find a voice. CARE (Citizens Association for Racial Equality) was founded to support that voice. It was extremely useful to employ the techniques of social analysis to do with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and it helped me clarify my thinking about that issue. This is still important.

*So Fanchette's influence was considerable?*

One of my colleagues was Father John Curnow. He was about 12 years older than me and came from very poor people. He was very intelligent and he never lost contact with his origins. Even before social analysis he already had techniques for challenging oppression but the ideas were not formally organised. Filip Fanchette showed him the formalised structure. John was a very challenging character as a clergyman. I didn't understand all of the stuff he talked about but I gradually came to realise that I needed to make some stands on issues myself. He recognised that I took a stand and he became a great supporter of my work, but first I had to put my stake in the ground.

We became strong allies in the last few years of his life and he often stayed in my home. We were close allies with other radical priests and nuns and we developed this organisation called Brothers and Sisters for Justice. John had great intellectual acumen—we worked together on a number of issues.

There was a lot of conflict back in those days, particularly to do with racism. We also had many conflicts internally in our movement over issues associated with Takaparawhau and the role of Pākehā in the struggle to prevent the sale of the land. We operated under the guidance of the Ōrākei Māori Action Committee, which was basically the Hawke whānau. I was the spokesperson for the working group. I worked in a team with Rene and Joe Hawke, and they were pretty shrewd. They had a pretty good analysis derived from the painful experience of the occupation in 1977–78. I'd have been happy to walk out and leave them to it but their analysis was they couldn't do it on their own—they needed a Pākehā to get Pākehā support for the struggle. So I hung in there. Some of the Waitangi Action Committee<sup>4</sup> people have never forgotten it and I could understand where they were coming from but there was an issue there—preventing that land from being sold—and we were successful. We prevented it from being sold.

There was one occasion where we went up there and occupied—we set up tents for the weekend but not on the actual land that was in contention. Muldoon<sup>5</sup> had said that if we put one foot on that land we'd get arrested. We had a meeting about it and I waited to see if anyone would come up with a way of us doing it and nobody did. The understanding was that everyone got arrested or no-one got arrested. So I suggested that we go up there in the form of a religious procession knowing that the police are careful about interfering with religious events. So I dressed up in my alb and stole and carried a bible and we went onto the land. Tim Shadbolt brought up some telephone poles and the people up there painted up seven or eight of them, each one devoted to an ancestor of Ngāti Whātua. We dug holes and put these things in and then we went around in the form of Stations of the Cross.

There was a policeman, a fellow called Gibson, and he knew that the people had a genuine grievance and he didn't interfere. When we finished Gibson came and said, 'You did that well.' At some point though it descended into a political rally—we left the grounds but the Waitangi Action Committee refused to leave and they got arrested. Joe Hawke was furious with them because they hadn't kept to the kaupapa. We had a meeting that went on until about two o'clock in the morning at the Hawke's house and it got resolved because Māori people have got ways of resolving these sorts of things.

During the last demonstration we had up there in April 1982—the one where we got arrested—I was at Joe and Rene's house on Saturday morning and there was a call from the Waitangi Action Committee and they asked to have me removed from the protest. I think they thought that if they could get rid of me then they'd be able to roll Rene and

---

<sup>4</sup> Another group active in protests such as this.

<sup>5</sup> The Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon.

Joe. In a way I understand how they were feeling about it, but at the time the three of us recognised that they simply didn't have the skill to be able to negotiate the whole thing. The Ōrākei Committee asked me to go on television with Hugh Kawharu who was against the Hawkes at that stage. I said, 'Get Joe Hawke to do it' and they said, 'We don't want Joe to do it—we'd prefer to have you doing it.' We had a meeting and I said, 'Well, you tell me what to say' and they did. Kawharu was saying, 'Who is this group of people; they don't represent Ngāti Whātua; they are just upstarts.' And I was to say, 'Well, who is Hugh Kawharu? He doesn't represent Ngāti Whātua because he is appointed by the Government.' It was a horrible position to be in.

Subsequently at some gathering I was walking down the stairs with Hugh and he thanked me for my contribution to the struggle at Ngāti Whātua. I said, 'There was an occasion when I was required on television to be critical of you but I hope that you understand that this was not meant personally.' He replied, 'Oh, I fully understand, in these political matters you have to take up a position and you have to be faithful to the position you take up.' So I felt that was very good really.

My experience at Bastion Point was that I devoted nine months of my life, more or less full time, to that struggle and a lot of my work was putting things down on paper—writing letters to the mayor and to the government, doing press releases and so on. I would check it out with the other Ōrākei Committee members but they would say, 'You write it, you're good at that.' So my experience is that Māori and Pākehā working together can be extremely powerful because Pākehā have skills that Māori don't have and Māori have skills that Pākehā don't have. You establish that strong bond, you are both on the same page, both working towards the same goals and committed to the strategy. Sometimes you have to argue over tactics but it doesn't destroy the relationship—it helps you to improve your practice. What can get in the way is when Pākehā want to dominate and be seen to be the leader and you just destroy everything that you've done when that happens. Sometimes you have to take that role and be seen to be the leader in order to progress a particular project but once you've reached those goals then that's it.

Bastion Point was an excellent example of Māori and Pākehā working together because—I'm a little unsure of the proportion of Māori and Pākehā on the 25th of May 1978 when 220 people got arrested—but in April 1982 when we got arrested there were more Pākehā arrested and there were more non-Ngāti Whātua Māori that got arrested than Ngāti Whātua. So the contribution to that struggle was pretty broad.

There was a certain divide between the activists and the theorists. CARE and HART (Halt All Racist Tours) tended to be the activists and then there were the theorists—it



created certain tensions. I've been challenged by John Minto<sup>6</sup> to be involved with structural change. He thinks I'm an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff and I should take a higher profile. I mulled that over because I've got a lot of respect for John. What I think is that if you're going to be that voice at the top of the cliff you've actually got to know what's going on at the bottom. I can't do everything so in the meantime I'll work at the bottom of the cliff.

I have been involved in a lot of different types of community work with tangata whenua. My understanding from Freire is that as a Pākehā working with Māori my task is to facilitate their methods and their control, not my own. From studying the IPA (Ideological Political Apparatus) I realise that working with oppressed groups is an extraordinarily challenging thing to do because so often I think I can see solutions but it would be counter-productive for me to impose them.

*Was there anything in particular you found useful from IPA?*

What I found most useful was the way it indicated fairly clearly who exercised power; how that power was exercised; who were the beneficiaries and who were the victims. That helped me for instance to recognise, in the heat of the struggle at Bastion Point, that the police are not your enemy. The police are agents of your enemy—your enemy is elsewhere. You have to keep that clearly in your mind because once you make the police your enemies you in fact forestall your struggle. And the Wave<sup>7</sup> also shows that some people can see an issue and other people can't. With some people you are never going to get them to see. Also the concept that the people who bring about the change aren't necessarily useful in making the change work. And that you have to know when it's time to withdraw.

I have taught a level three theology paper at Auckland University, called 'Justice in Context' which was social analysis using Freire's ideas. However as I get older I find doing both academic teaching and activist work is too hard so I have finished with teaching. When I was teaching I strenuously avoided too much lecturing at the blackboard as a model—occasionally people learn something from the blackboard but it shouldn't dominate. My focus was pointing out to theological students that the current system is not neutral—justice requires us to try and look at the world from the point of view of the oppressed.

I have been involved in Arohanui<sup>8</sup> and worked with the late Betty Wark over a number of years—I continue to be the chairperson of Ngāti Arohanui Trust. Betty was an

---

<sup>6</sup> A key figure in HART

<sup>7</sup> Another structural analysis tool. See <http://awea.org.nz/introducing-wave>

<sup>8</sup> A residential home, run by Betty Wark, providing rehabilitation services particularly to young Māori and Pasifika people.

absolutely devoted person who really became a voice for marginalised people. There was a problem with Betty though which was that she always wanted to be at the head of whatever she was involved with. In many ways that was a good model but it did mean that people who worked with her didn't really learn from experience. They were directed by her. I had resigned from the trust but when she was dying she asked me to come back, and I said to her, 'But Betty you've trained people to run this house' and she said, 'Yes, they know how to run this house but they don't understand the politics.'

After Betty died there was a meeting of the Arohanui whānau—the only Pākehā there were Kevin Temm, the accountant, and myself. I was elected chairperson and I knew that I was inheriting something that was not working very well. What I did for a long time was try to create a situation where I used my skills to assist Māori to make that thing work—I tried to avoid taking it over and using Pākehā methods to make it work. I persevered with that model for a long time, but in fact it didn't work. In the end we got evicted out of that jolly house. The need for that service is as great as ever, and I don't intend to give up, but it taught me a lesson. What I had tried to do was have it so that Māori did the work and achieved the outcome. It's a painful lesson really—finding out that the best model is Pākehā and Māori working together with their respective skills and both contributing to the outcome. So now I'm taking a more proactive role.

The difficulty is that you've got to deal with the Pākehā bureaucracy. When you are in the field that we're working in, which is rehabilitation of Māori with drug and alcohol problems who have offended against the law, you've just got to battle against that structure. You need people to take control who know how to battle with that structure in order for Māori to do what they can do, which is to create a community, a whānau, where their people can learn to be confident in themselves and learn their own skills in time. Arohanui works to give them a whānau experience and help with te reo Māori and numeracy and literacy. But there are all these bureaucratic issues with the Department of Justice, which the young ones find it hard to deal with, especially if they are based up North and have to keep travelling to court. I would love to employ an efficient Pākehā to deal with all the institutions but I can't do that because it would be a take-over.

There are distinctions between cultural, political and economic aspects of society. I remember up at Waitangi, the protesters arrived at Te Tii marae and Māori were invited in but Pākehā weren't. I remember a Pākehā getting apoplectic saying, 'The issue is class not race, once you divide us...' If you look at it from an economic base, which the Marxists do, then sure, it's unhelpful. But if you look at it from a cultural base then there is something to be gained from Māori being able to go into the marae and represent their protest. I had no problem with that.

Once you break society down into components you can see where the strategies for liberation are. I use the key tools for social analysis in all my community work. I am involved with John De Silva in the Whakapakiri youth justice project based on Great Barrier Island. Again it is vital we maintain the Māori cultural emphasis in the courses there but it is hard to get people with those skills to go and live in the isolated environments. Child Youth and Family (CYF) has critiqued us, saying the programme is good for the kids while they are with us but that there is nothing afterwards. This is about resources. We had a meeting with the Iwi Māori Services of CYF last night. There were two Pākehā and one Māori from their office. The Māori person barely spoke and I found it all quite racist. Often we Pākehā don't see a cultural perspective. We get caught up in bureaucracy and we have to step back and ask ourselves, 'What is going on here in terms of culture?' I am constantly using the analysis tools because I believe as auxiliaries we do have specific roles and we do have some skills.

We need good theory. Always we have to go back to social analysis and look at our base. Often in working on issues we do not go back to our base and look at the relationships and contexts of right now. In Aotearoa today I feel we have to work on the key struggle—which is in support of the struggle of the tangata whenua. Economic issues are also important. The gaps between the rich and poor in this country are huge now. It's all very well for organisations and the Crown to have the Treaty on the wall in their foyer, but if the economic base has been eaten out the cultural power is hollow. It is the same with the political base—the struggle lies in mobilising so that the poorest people are at least able to share in the public life of this country in a way that is suitable for their needs.