

ARE WE ALONE?



The discovery of what seem to be underground oceans on Mars has sent scientists reeling, but the latest satellite pictures are fuelling speculation that there may also be buildings there - MIKE KOWALSKI has more

It hit the Internet first. The news service SPACE.COM reported an “exclusive” story on June 22, NZST, that water had been found on Mars, and that *Science* magazine would be announcing the stunning news in a few days. By morning, the cat was out of the bag. NASA itself called a news conference as journalists from around the world clamoured for confirmation of the “bizarre” internet story: surely it couldn’t be true - we’d all been told Mars was too cold and without enough atmosphere to support liquid water, and without liquid water we had also been assured by the men in white coats that there was almost “no chance” of life on the red planet.

Yeah, well, sometimes the men in white coats get it

wrong. The latest pictures from a satellite currently orbiting Mars show evidence of liquid water in about 250 different images.

“We cannot rule out that some of them are so recent as to have formed yesterday,” scientist Michael Malin told shocked journalists.

“We were quite surprised and confused, because it doesn’t really fit our models of what Mars is like.”

Malin, who heads Malin Space Science Systems, built the camera being used by NASA’s Mars Global Surveyor craft to map the Martian terrain. Unlike previous missions which could only photograph objects bigger than a football field, the MGS camera can see objects as small as a



NASA now believes the channels in the pictures above carried water as recently as “yesterday”. Each of the channels is about 1km long.

Honda CRV. Another Malin Systems scientist, Kenneth Edgett, admits the discovery has come as a blow to science’s comfort zone.

“I was dragged kicking and screaming to this conclusion. Mars is nothing like we thought Mars was going to be like before this camera got there. It’s not your mother’s Mars.”

So what are the possibilities? A century ago, astronomers believed they had discovered evidence of canals on Mars, but those theories were shot down by early space missions to the planet that revealed a dead red rock covered in dust.

Although it was obvious Mars had once had oceans just like Earth, these had vanished. Without running water, scientists believed there was only a remote chance of life, and even that would be restricted to bacteria and microbes.

But now that’s changed.

“Twenty-eight years ago the Mariner 9 spacecraft found evidence - in the form of channels and valleys - that billions of years ago the planet had water flowing across its surface,” Edgett told reporters.

“Ever since that time, Mars science has focused on the question, ‘Where did the water go?’ The new pictures from Global Surveyor tell us part of the answer - some of that water went underground, and quite possibly it’s still there.”

NASA says it appears Mars has oceans, or at least large subterranean lakes, trapped up to 400 metres below the surface of the planet in various areas.

Malin and Edgett believe the water is escaping in occasional but violent “flash floods”: dumping the equivalent of seven Olympic-size swimming pools down *each* individual river channel.

“We see features that look like gullies formed by flowing water and the deposits of soil and rocks transported by these flows,” says Malin.

“The features appear to be so young that they might be forming today. We think we are seeing evidence of a ground water supply.

“These are new landforms that have never been seen before on Mars.”

“The presence of liquid water on Mars has profound implications for the question of life not only in the past, but perhaps even today,” says NASA’s Associate Administrator for Space Science, Dr Ed Weiler.

But Weiler cautions against making too many mental leaps too fast.

“They certainly have not found hot tubs with Martians in them...We are not saying we have found life on Mars.”

Even so, scientists are already asking some intriguing questions - if Mars once had vast oceans capable of supporting marine life, isn’t it possible that that life could have gone underground with the water? In which case, it might not be bacteria that scientists should be looking for.

“If life ever did develop there,” concedes Weiler, “and if it survives to the present time, then these landforms would be great places to look.”

Puzzled at the appearance of running water on a surface technically incapable of carrying water, Malin and Edgett searched hard for an explanation, and believe they’ve found it. The water is bursting out of crater walls and cliffs in some of the coldest regions on Mars, not as continuous rivers but in occasional violent gushes.

“When water evaporates it cools the ground,” says



Edgett. "That would cause the water behind the initial seepage site to freeze. This would result in pressure building up behind an 'ice dam'. Ultimately, the dam would break and send a flood down the gully."

With water present, it is now almost certain that a manned mission to Mars will take place, and NASA is already talking about the possibility of a human colony there.

Water not only provides a food source, it is also the key ingredient in rocket fuel.

But while the latest Mars Global Surveyor images have forced a major rethink in the space agency about their views on Mars, there are some other images coming back from the planet that are increasing speculation about the possibility of an advanced civilisation having lived there.

In 1972, Mariner 9 took the first of many photos to cause NASA scientists major grief. Passing over an area known as the Elysium Quadrangle, the spacecraft photographed what appeared to be a group of massive Egyptian-style pyramids.

The discovery perplexed the scientists, with Carl Sagan describing them as vast "beckoning pyramids". The tallest of them is more than a kilometre high - ten times taller than the Great Pyramid at Giza and a staggering 1000 times larger in volume.

Although Sagan believed they were natural mountains, "sand-blasted" over the ages, geologists have been unable to find any natural equivalents on Earth, or replicate the pyramids in a series of wind-tunnel erosion tests.

Then the 1976 Viking missions provided the most striking visual evidence of civilised life yet: a series of photographs taken in the Cydonia region, on the Martian equator.

Viking 2 had not yet landed, and NASA official Tobias Owen was searching through aerial pictures for an ideal landing spot when a colleague heard him mutter, "Oh my God, look at this!"

What Owen had found was Viking image 35A72, and staring back at him appeared to be the face of a Sphinx, or as some suggested "one of the characters in *Planet of the Apes*".

A short time later that photo was tabled during a media briefing on the Viking project, with NASA staff according it "curiosity value" only and suggesting it was just a trick of the light.

"The huge rock formation in the centre, which resembles a human head, is formed by shadows giving the illusions of eyes, nose and a mouth," explained a NASA media release. "The feature is 1.5 kilometres across...the picture was taken on July 25 from a range of 1,873 kilometres." Also apparent in the image were more of the massive pyramids of the kind seen elsewhere on the planet by the Mariner spacecraft.

Surprisingly, although Cydonia had been chosen by NASA as its "prime" landing spot for Viking 2, a decision was made the following day to choose a different landing site hundreds of kilometres away.

Despite NASA playing down the image of "The Face" as a trick of light and shadow, more images came in of the

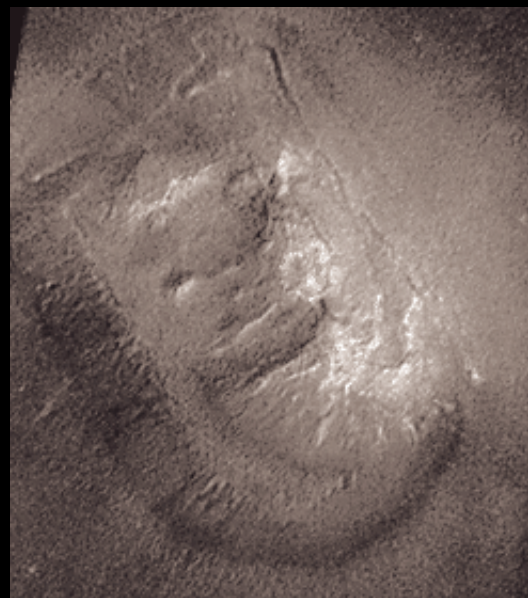
object from the Viking 1 orbiter, and

it still looked like a human face in all of them. Those images were not publicised until their "rediscovery" in 1979 when two scientists on contract from Lockheed Corporation to the Goddard Space Centre located them in NASA's "deep space archives".

Other scientists, like Mark Carlotto, began to suspect there was a lot more to the Cydonia region than NASA was letting on, and carried out computerised cleaning and enhancement of the Cydonia images. Although half "The Face" was in shadow, the visible half certainly appeared to have human features, including what appeared to be an eyeball. Now, two decades later, fresh pictures from the Global Surveyor have confirmed the existence of the face. The latest picture (below) shows an eroded mass, but one where the main features are still visible - including the alleged eyeball. A number of straight edges can also be seen.

Until human astronauts touch down on the Martian surface for an archaeological dig, we won't know for certain whether intelligent life existed - or still exists - there. Back on Earth that's left the field wide open for conspiracy theorists, scientists and archaeologists to engage in heated debate about the Martian "anomalies".

The conspiracy theorists point to NASA's total refusal to land any spacecraft in the Cydonia region following the discovery of "The Face" as proof that the space agency



The latest NASA photo of "The Face" with eyeball, nostrils, mouth: *Planet of the Apes?* Earlier Viking version pictured overleaf

knows something that the rest of us don't. They also point to the mysterious Mars Observer satellite mission that failed in 1993 just as the spacecraft went into orbit. The craft disappeared, and an official inquiry later determined that NASA scientists had *deliberately* shut the satellite down just as it began sending back pictures of objects on the Martian surface.

Subsequently, two more US space missions to Mars - the Polar Lander and the Probe - also vanished without trace just as they went into orbit over the red planet late last year.

Archaeologists, meanwhile, are drawing distinctions between the half-man/half-lion Egyptian Sphinx, which in some historical texts carries the Egyptian name for Mars, and the ancient Hindu name for the planet Mars - Nr Simha - which also means "the Man-Lion".

But the Cydonia controversy is only the tip of the Martian iceberg. Two years ago American researcher Terry James, flicking through some NASA archival images on the internet, zoomed in closer to view an anomaly inside a crater in the area known as Meridiani. What he saw in the first frame he checked was deeply in shadow, but appeared to be a face featuring eyes, nose and cheeks staring back at him. He discovered seven more photos, including the one below. Although even with the best images half the face was still indistinct, James used computer enhanced imaging techniques to "mirror" the best side.

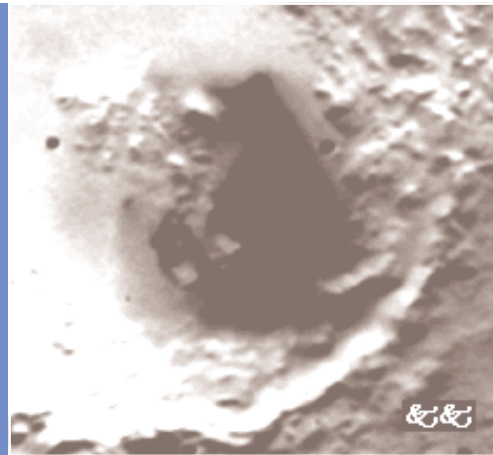
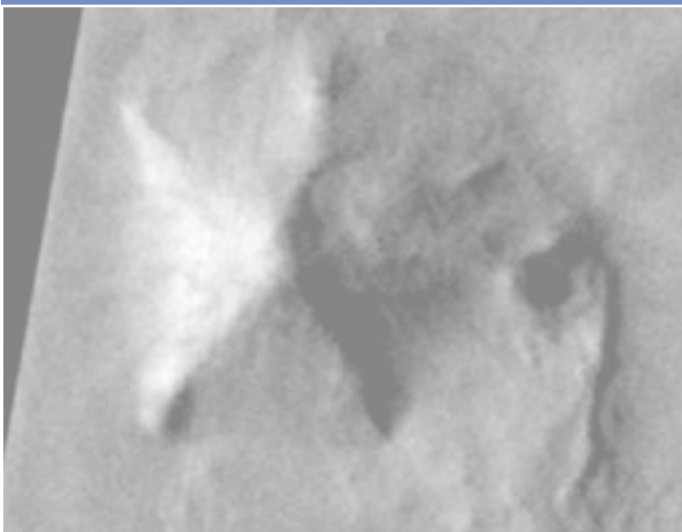
That left him with an image (bottom) of what appeared to be a clear human face, embedded in the Martian rock.

Once again, until somebody physically lands at Meridiani, the world won't know for sure whether the sculptures are real or just eerily natural.

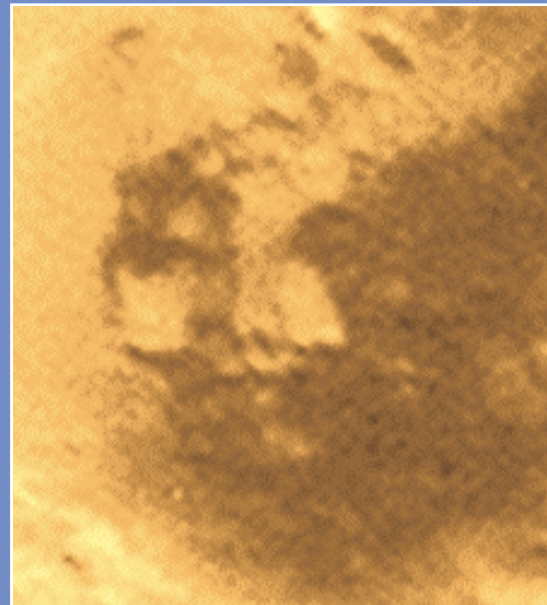
But last month's NASA discovery of vast reserves of water under the Martian surface underlines a big question: where did we come from?

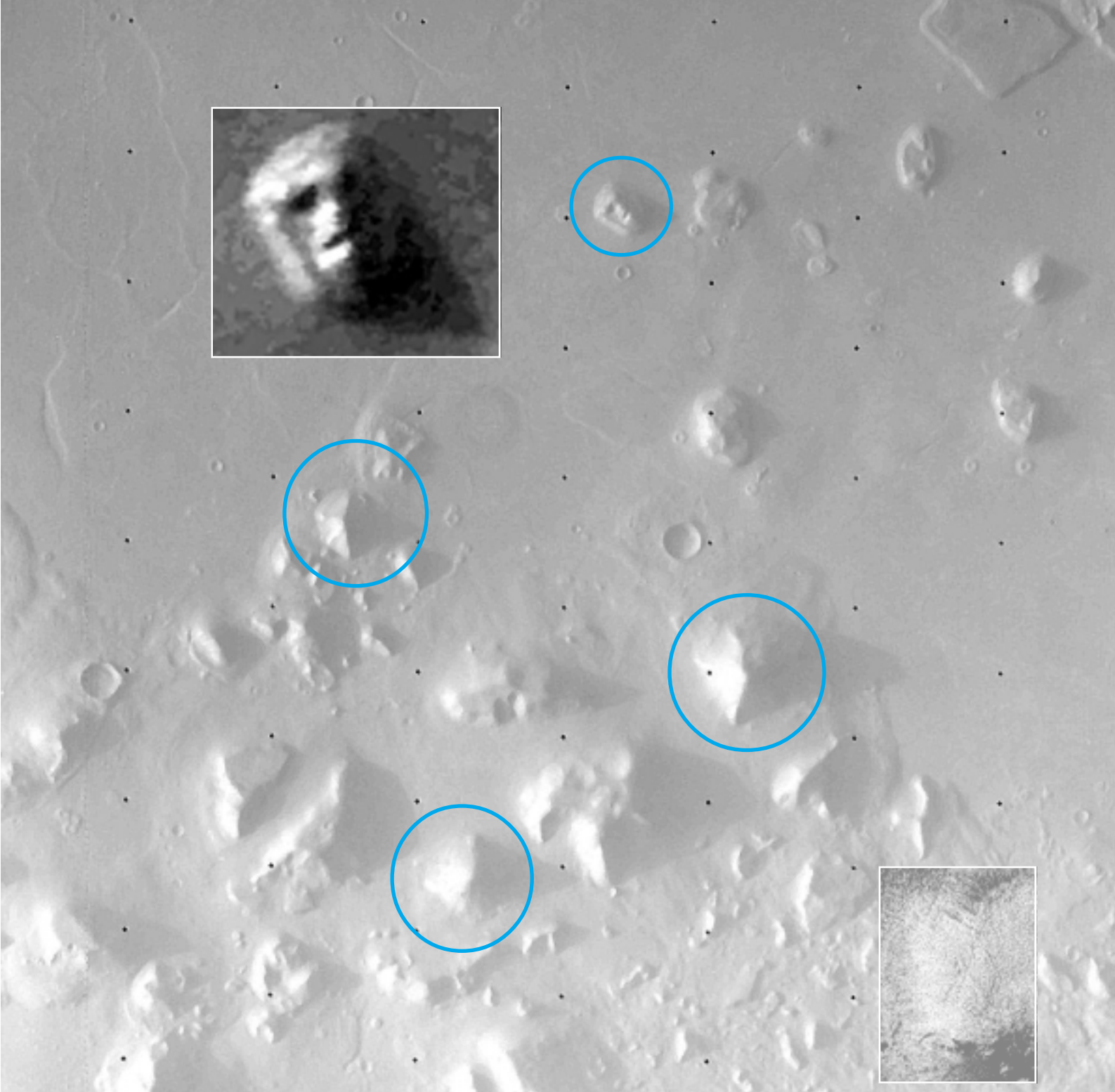


BELOW: Microbes don't build Pyramids. This new high resolution NASA camera image clearly shows the perfectly straight edges

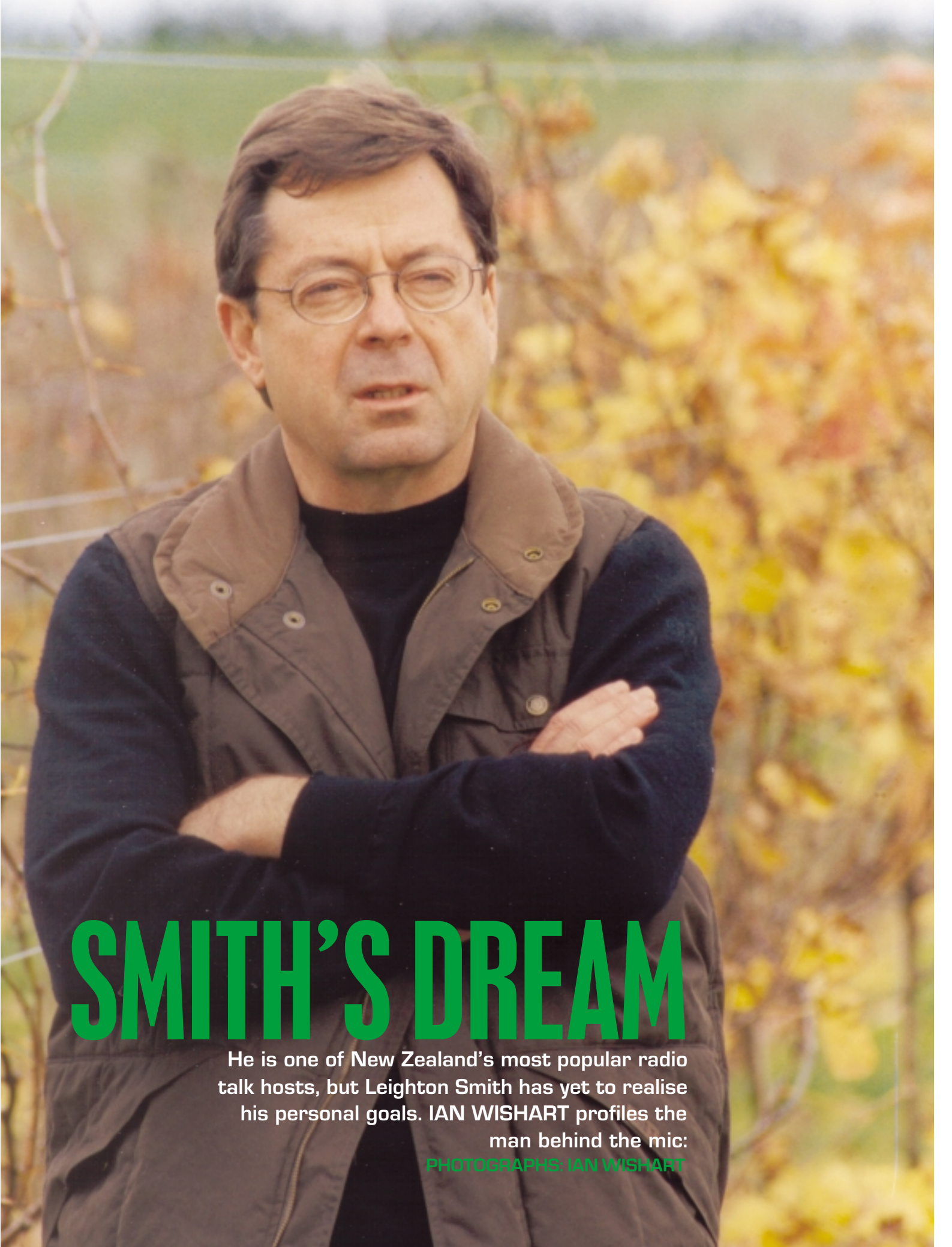


ABOVE: The Face at Meridiani. BELOW: After brightening one of the eight images and, BOTTOM: After mirroring the Face.





Arguably the most controversial photograph ever taken by NASA, this Viking satellite image of the Cydonia region in 1976 shows what appear to be Egyptian-style pyramids arranged in an almost-perfect triangle, and a Sphinx-like face (top circle, and INSET 1). Whilst some tiny crystals on Earth can take a pyramid form, the geological structure is not natural in mountainous rock. The shadows cast by these pyramid-like objects on Mars show a perfect symmetry and a perfect point. The cluster of “pyramids” has been nicknamed “The City” by Mars researchers both inside and outside NASA. If you measure from the tip of the bottom pyramid to the tip of either of the two others, you’ll find they are almost exactly the same distance apart. Is it evidence of an ancient civilisation on the red planet? Despite the mysterious disappearance of several NASA and Russian spacecraft sent to Mars to investigate, some new images have been transmitted back this year that appear to reinforce the possibility. INSET 2: Hi-res photo of Martian surface taken by MGS shows, in the top centre, grid lines.



SMITH'S DREAM

He is one of New Zealand's most popular radio talk hosts, but Leighton Smith has yet to realise his personal goals. IAN WISHART profiles the man behind the mic:

PHOTOGRAPHS: IAN WISHART

Go ahead, ask me if I'm a racist," Leighton Smith says provocatively. It wasn't a question on the agenda, but hey, I'll bite: "OK, Wouldn't it be fair to say you're a tub-thumping, dyed-in-the-wool redneck racist and curmudgeon who doesn't have a kind word to say about anyone?"

"Well, the answer is: I am if you want me to be. I'll tell you my feelings on race. When it comes down to it, I make my judgements on individuals - their behaviour, their attitude - if you move with a mob then expect to be tarred with the same brush.

"I'm not a racist on an individual basis. I could be a cultural racist, if you like, because there's no question in my mind that Western culture, as it's developed over the past 500 years or so, is by far the superior culture in the world.

"I'm not talking about personal cultural things, I'm talking about knowledge, information, development. To suggest that a jungle drum is as worthwhile as a Beethoven symphony is, of course, a load of bullshit, but some people will argue that.

"Primitive culture has very little to offer. That's why it's still primitive."

An Australian by birth, the laconic Smith trained as a law student before taking a job in radio across the Tasman.

But it was an offer he couldn't refuse from Radio New Zealand in Wellington that brought him to this country in 1980 as a host on 2ZB. He only intended to stay a year but remained for five. Following a brief stint back in Australia in the mid 1980s, Smith was headhunted back in 1987 to join the birth of Newstalk ZB in Auckland.

Since then, he's become more than attuned to the issues wracking the country.

"People think that I'm being and others are being overdramatic, but I've well and truly decided that Waitangi is the basis of many of the ills in New Zealand.

"You've got a scrappy, ill-defined little treaty that was signed between two groups of people who no longer exist: the Queen at the time, and *some* Maori tribes.

"As long as Maori don't make headway and don't progress, the rest of the country won't progress either. The Treaty divides Maori, and it is increasingly dividing Pakeha and Maori. There is a growing expectation from Maori that the world owes them a living under the Treaty.

"There is no country in the world, where tribalism exists, where you have progress."

And progress, he claims, flowered only briefly - during the reign of Roger Douglas.

"Post 84, Labour gave us direction, a sense of vision. Their second win in 1987 was an even bigger victory than the first one, in 1984. People had hope, they had spirit.

"Basically I blame Lange, and his cup of tea, as the initial stumbling block, because if we'd had a flat tax rate in this country I reckon it would have raged ahead.

"So National then came in and stalled - did some very bad things with Doug Graham: he's a disgrace, in my opinion, to the people of this country and its future - but we stalled and lost that sense of direction and now we've got a Government in that's desperately trying to straddle all

the wings and all the "isms" and it will fail quite drastically.

"The socialist left doesn't have the answers, they'll screw the country, and I suppose if you gave the far right the chance they'd do the same. How does a country confront the fact that it's really a Third World country but it has First World expectations?"

If there's one thing Smith rails against, it's the involvement of the State in commerce.

"Was it such a bright idea," I wonder aloud, "for New Zealand to sell off Telecom, instead of leaving it owned by the Government so that taxpayers could benefit by \$800 million a year in profits. After all, for the billion or so dollars in capital that Telecom needed, look at all the rewards the overseas shareholders received."

"When you've got the taxpayer involved, it means the Government's involved, as the taxpayer's representative, and it means the Government's completely open to political blackmail by sectors of the community. You can go anywhere in the world and you'll see that Governments bend under political pressure."

That's the thing about talkback hosts like Smith. Particularly Smith: they're very good at sounding persuasive. It's not until I'm later reviewing the interview that I think of a follow-up question: "But what if the Government is forced into a passive shareholder role, in the same way as investors in mutual funds participate, meaning taxpayers get the dividends but don't influence the management...?"

I'm sure he'd have a ready answer. But we do agree on the fact that New Zealanders are not saving enough.

"Until New Zealanders are *forced* to take part in a savings scheme, nothing will change. I voted for the Peters



scheme, by the way," he adds. "I don't think it had a show in Hades of getting off the ground at that time - the overwhelming opposition to it was because it was Peters, nothing else."

Ask him about the recent dumping of his long-time colleague Chris Carter and he, sensibly, demurs. But he is obviously mindful of the vagaries of radio, and is still waiting to hear if his Sky TV show is going ahead.

"I want to keep doing what I'm doing for another few years, because I enjoy it. It'll depend on whether the audience stays with me, because I'm finding it very difficult



not to speak my mind. I've got opportunities elsewhere. I can always go back to Australia of course, and I can go to the States at any time, but I've made a bed here and I want to sleep in it. I want to sleep well in it."

Is it getting harder to stay in New Zealand though?

"I don't want to answer that on the record," he quips, before waving his arm in a wide sweep towards his vineyard:

"I don't know the answer, because I'm just in the process of realising a dream, a project I started three years ago. But I don't know if I could have the same vision if I was starting now." An avid aficionado of all things Tuscan, Smith also wanted to provide his children with a lifestyle experience. When the land came up for sale in 1997 he took a punt and began building his winery.

He's named it "Il Monticello" after Thomas Jefferson's estate, and just had delivered a massive carved stone name plaque from Italy to attach to the front of the mansion. There's an old saying about not carving things in stone prematurely:

"I've become thoroughly disillusioned in the last several days having found out that there's already a winery in the Napa Valley called Monticello, and as I'm going to export to the States, it's an absolute piss-off."

The vineyard itself is a little piece of Italy in the southern pastures of Auckland. Not only was it designed by an Italian architect living in Auckland, but virtually every nut and bolt of it has been shipped out from Italy: doors, win-

dows, handles, tiles, even the entire kitchen is on its way to New Zealand via ship as you read this. Expensive? Very, but not necessarily because it is made in Italy.

"Look at this," Smith explains, caressing the double glazed cypress window frames. "Now as a matter of interest, the cost of these, the windows and the shutters, all the joinery, was only two-thirds of the price of the local quote, and this product is twice as good and streets in front in terms of technology."

Il Monticello has already produced its first vintage: eight barrels of wine, and Smith feels its where he wants to be. He's wired the house so he can run his radio show in rustic splendour, and his neighbours have just set a dozen turkeys loose on the property after Smith expressed a desire to have some. He thought it was a delightful gift, but then happened to speak to the 14 year old daughter of one of the neighbours.

"What happened to all your other turkeys?" he asked her.

"Oh, Dad had to shoot them. They were eating all the grapes."

Still, Smith's not too fazed, and remarks with a big grin that his turkeys were last seen scampering up the hill and back into the neighbour's property.



IT'S HOT

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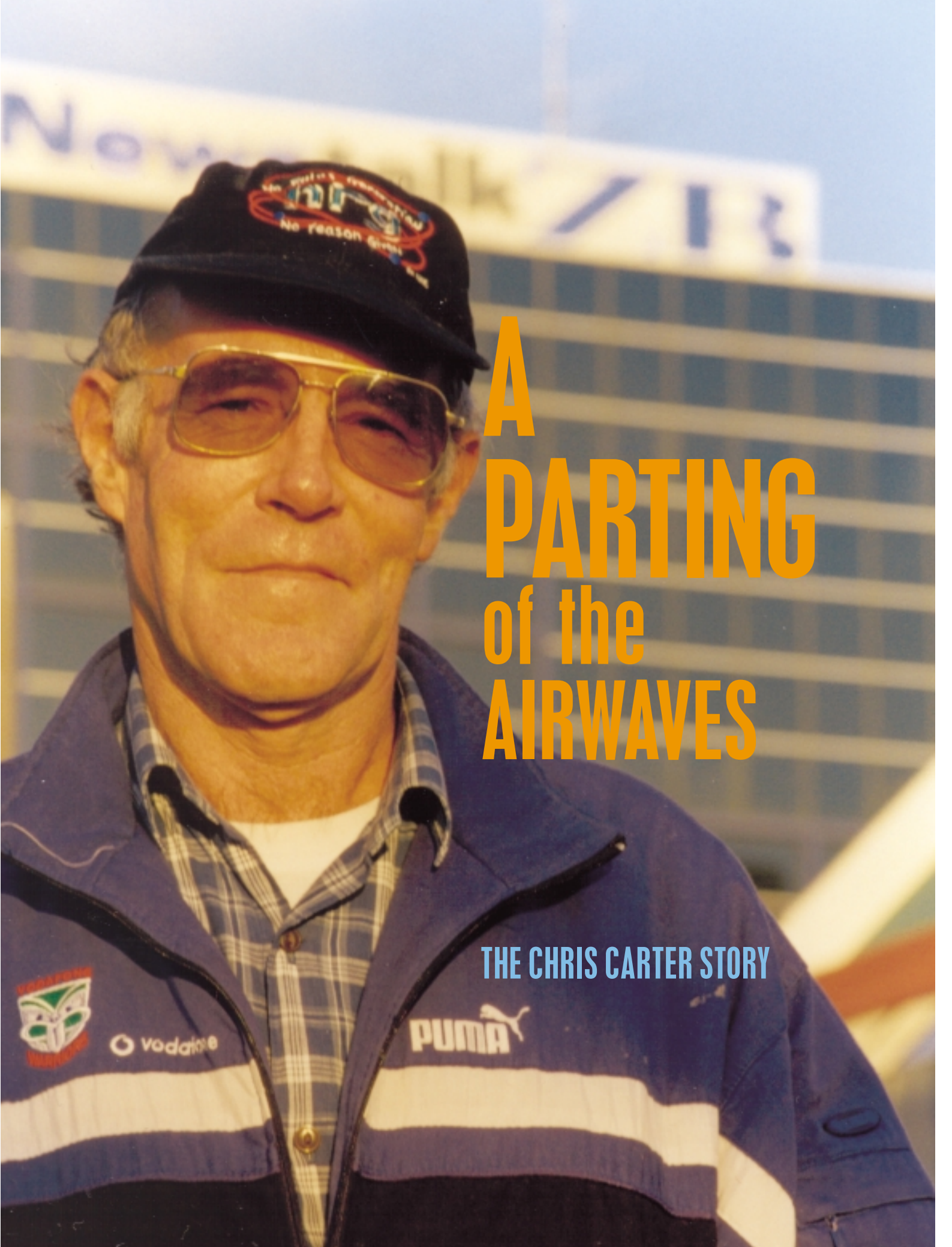
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A PARTING of the AIRWAVES

THE CHRIS CARTER STORY



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He was the number one afternoon talkback host in the land, and sometimes the number one afternoon radio show overall, but it didn't save him. Nor did the fact that he'd only recently received a \$20,000 a year pay rise. Despite all that, his number was up. On Friday, June 2, a stunned Chris Carter talkback audience nationwide switched on their radios to hear the man they'd listened to for seven years bidding them adieu. How had it come to this?

Outspoken and strongly opinionated, Carter stumbled into radio, almost exactly 20 years ago, entirely by accident.

"I got into radio as a result of going to a dinner party with an old mate of mine, who'd ended up working as the station manager of Radio Pacific. And over many beers, because I don't drink wine, I got into an enormous debate with a couple of his dinner guests.

"He rang me the next day and said, 'Shit, that was fun - do you think you could do that on the radio?' Well, I said 'I've never sat behind a mic in my life, as you well know,' but about two months later with about two hours' notice he said 'Get on out here and we'll put you on air!' " Such is the way of serendipity.

A jack of all trades in his previous working life, Carter epitomised the hard-working easy-going Kiwi, the kind of people talkback radio is aimed at.

After a period working the 8pm-midnight shift at Newstalk ZB, Carter found himself shoulder-tapped for the prime time afternoon show. Given his recent dismissal, the way he got the afternoon job isn't without irony.

"I'm an opportunist, and if an opportunity comes along that I think that I can do, I'll do it." The opportunity involved the departure of the then-incumbent: Angela D'Audney.

"These things go around, don't they?" cackles Carter. "Your turn comes around eventually."

But the difference is that - unlike D'Audney - Carter wasn't prepared to die quietly. He'd first become aware of his impending fate when he confronted his boss back in February.

"I was getting a new house and had extended myself a bit with a fair slice of it on mortgage - and I haven't had a mortgage for years - so I said 'righto, well, I've got half a year to run on my contract, what's the guts? Are we all sweet to renew?'

"Well, anyway, he sort of hedged so I really put it on him and he said 'No, I'm not going to renew it. We want to try a new direction.'

"Purely and simply, they'd obviously lined up Danny Watson who'd been sniffing around - inasmuch as he'd been doing some part time work at night - and they've now got Danny. And may God bless all of those who sail in him."

Most of the Newstalk ZB staff were unaware of Carter's axing until a memo was issued about 18 hours before the event. But the *New Zealand Herald*, which is a sister com-

pany of the radio network, had heard weeks earlier that Carter had been given "the humpty-dumpty".

The condemned host persuaded the *Herald* that "it might not be good commercially for the group" if the paper ran a story on his dismissal six weeks prior to the final day.

"The reason for that is obvious: there's no way I could have continued running a radio show if my listeners had known then that I was out.

"So I promised the *Herald* reporter an exclusive if he held off until the end, and I said I'd ring him.

"I was just about to pick up the phone to call him on the eve of D-Day - I was sitting in the lounge, actually, watching telly and my wife said to me 'You really must give that *Herald* reporter a ring', and I said 'You're right', and just as I stood up to do it the phone rang and it was him!"

The story ran the next morning, and was the first that his listeners and even some of his colleagues (who'd missed the memo) knew that the Carter era had come to an end. Carter received 800 emails and faxes from listeners

after his departure, and wryly remarks that many of the public believe he was sacrificed because of his strident criticism of the Labour Government.

He himself could not possibly comment, but finds it strange that he was being avidly praised by his bosses only a few months earlier for giving the previous National Government hell in the run-up to the election.

"Only a few months ago, I was congratulated by the boss, and he gave me a \$20,000 a year pay rise. The Government changes in November, and in June I'm gone.

"I really am apolitical, in the sense that I think all politicians are bastards - not as

individuals because I'm sure there are some nice ones - but as a profession I think prostitution is positively respectable compared with politics.

"I was lining them up and starting to give them a real bollocking. It would be fair to say it didn't go down too well with some of the management at Newstalk ZB, who thought otherwise."

As for the future?

"It took me just three days to put together a package worth more than my annual salary at Newstalk ZB, which was not inconsiderable."

Apart from joining *Investigate* magazine as a regular columnist, he has a number of other projects on the boil and doesn't rule out a return to talkback at some future point. Not that his future depends on it.

"Without wanting to sound arrogant, and I hope I'm not, I have faith in my abilities in a number of fields, and it never occurred to me that I would be sitting on a street corner with a tin cup. I know I will always be making a quid."

I think all politicians are bastards - not as individuals because I'm sure there are some nice ones - but as a profession I think prostitution is positively respectable compared with politics





SPEED KILLS

or does it?

For more than two decades the New Zealand public has been sold the claim that “speed kills” - now new international road crash data is showing higher speed limits may actually save lives - [IAN WISHART](#) with the story

PHOTOGRAPHS: IAN WISHART

When New Zealand drivers turn on their television sets each evening, chances are they'll see at least one advertisement featuring a car slamming into a car/pole/wall/child. The inherent message? The same as it's been since 1974 - "Speed Kills". Sure, the pictures may have become more graphic, but the underlying tone has always been that speed of any kind kills.

So haunting are the images that there is probably not a mother in the country who doesn't think about it. But what if it was all a crock? What if the researchers behind the road safety campaigns had jumped to the wrong conclusions about road fatalities two decades ago, and created a very slick, very persuasive advertising message that was utterly wrong? As New Zealanders who remember the erroneous "one father in four is a child rapist" Telethon campaign of 1988 already know, neither Governments nor advertising agencies are infallible, and the old computer adage "put junk in, get junk out" applies.

So let's get to the crunch: cold hard facts on the effect of speed on the road toll.

In the early 1970s, as a result of the 1973 oil shock, both New Zealand and the United States imposed new, lower speed limits in an effort to save fuel. In New Zealand's case the limit dropped from 60 mph (100ks) to 50mph (80ks), while in the US it dropped to 55 mph - the so-called "double nickel".

In the ten years leading up to the drop in the New Zealand speed limit, an average of 608 New Zealanders had died on the roads each year.

In the ten years that followed the drop from 100 kph down to 80 kph, an average of 707 New Zealanders died on the roads each year: in other words, the new, lower New Zealand speed limit coincided with a 17% increase in road deaths. Starting to get the picture?

Then, in 1985, the New Zealand Government decided to raise the speed limit again, from 80kph back up to 100kph. The result?

Well, admittedly there was a big jump in road deaths

that year as people got used to driving their cars faster, but it also coincided with boom times in the economy and a big increase in drink-driving offences.

However, over the next ten years, the average number of New Zealanders killed on the roads each year was 699, a slight drop when compared with the ten years under a lower speed limit.

Could it actually be that allowing cars to drive faster decreases the road toll overall? Sure, the chances of surviving a crash at a higher speed were much slimmer for those involved, but perhaps the higher speeds contributed to smoother traffic flows and less road rage.

One of the reasons that road toll statistics supplied by the old Ministry of Transport, and latterly the LTSA, have been misleading is because the LTSA does not measure

"deaths per vehicle kilometre travelled", which is the only true measure of whether the road toll is really going up or down.

For example, if 1000 people die on the roads each year, during which time the nation's cars have travelled a million kilometres, the ratio is one death per thousand kilometres. You can then compare that figure to a subsequent year when, perhaps, 1100 people were killed but (because of cheaper petrol maybe) the nation's cars travelled 1.3 million kilometres.

The LTSA would simplistically tell the public "the road toll has increased", without realising that the "death per kilometre ratio" has dropped to 1 per 1181 kilometres. The truth in such a situation is that the road toll has dropped in real terms, by about 20 percent.

The closest New Zealand gets to any worthwhile statistics at all are the figures that measure the ratio of deaths to the number of cars on the road.

For the ten years that our maximum speed limit was only 80 kilometres per hour, an average of 3.75 New Zealanders were killed each year for every ten thousand cars on the road.

For the ten years after that, when the speed limit increased to 100 kph, the average number of deaths dropped



by 12%, to just 3.27 deaths per 10,000 vehicles.

The ratio of people injured per 10,000 vehicles tells a similar story: during the low speed era, an average of 100.6 injuries. During the high speed era that followed: just 80.5. A twenty percent drop in injuries in real terms when cars were allowed to travel faster.

While New Zealand officials have yet to acknowledge the flaw in their road toll analysis for the past 25 years, and continue pouring taxpayer money into arguably misleading advertisements, United States researchers have been stunned to discover some equally shocking truths.

In both NZ and the USA, traffic authorities noticed an immediate drop in the road toll following the introduction of the lower speed limits in 1974. In New Zealand's case, fatalities dropped by an incredible 167, while in the US road deaths on interstate highways dropped by almost 9,000.

To traffic planners the answer seemed obvious: lower speed equals fewer deaths. What they didn't factor in, however, was the cost of petrol. Oil prices had rocketed so high that people cut travel to a minimum. Fewer cars on the road meant fewer deaths.

This may be one reason why New Zealand's road toll has dropped over the past 12 months - a 37 percent increase in the cost of petrol - rather than the Government's much vaunted Photo ID licence.

For 13 years the US Government maintained its 55 mph limit on the interstates until, in 1987, the President allowed individual American states to raise their speed limits to 65 mph if they chose to. Then, an interesting thing happened.

Consumers Research Magazine in the US published a story in 1997 revealing that those states that had raised their speed limits to 65 mph experienced a "3.4% to 5.1% drop in fatalities when compared to states where the speed limits did not change."

In 1995, after fierce lobbying for and against, President Clinton decided to remove federal speed limits entirely, allowing individual states to decide their own limits on all their roads.

Road safety campaigner Ralph Nader believed the move would be a tragedy for America.

"Visualise, please, what is at stake, between 6,000 and 7,000 more fatalities annually, tens of thousands of disabling injuries, US\$19 billion in public health and related costs a year."

Nader probably based his figures on the almost 9,000 decrease in fatalities when speed limits were reduced, figuring the road toll position would simply reverse back to the bad old days. But this was based on a flawed analysis of why the road toll actually dropped, as we've already shown.

Sure enough, Ralph Nader was wrong this time. Instead of 7,000 more deaths on the road as a result of the US abolishing open road speed limits, an official report compiled by the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in 1998 revealed an increase in road fatalities of only 350 people across the US - not statistically significant.

But the NHTSA, the US equivalent of our LTSA, had vehemently opposed the abolition of speed limits and was trying to put the worst spin on it, continuing to push the "Speed Kills" message in its publicity material.

Independent researchers see it differently.

"The latest statistics," says National Motorists Association spokesman Eric Peters, "should provide some tasty garnish for the crow sandwich now being placed in front of such doomsayers as former NHTSA chief Joan Claybrook and Clarence Ditlow, her cohort from the Centre of Auto Safety.

"Of the 36 states to set higher-than-55-mph interstate speed limits, the majority showed an improvement in traffic safety.

"In California, where interstate speed limits are [now] set at 70 mph, the fatality rate declined 4 percent between 1995 and 1996 - the best record since 1961. In Mississippi, the fatality rate dropped an impressive 21 percent after the highway limit was raised from 55 mph to 70 mph."

In Montana, where speed limits were abolished entirely, the number of road deaths dropped by five percent.

The reason? According to Peters, motorists will determine their own sensible speed limits according to conditions.

"Fifty-five miles per hour, or even 65 mph for that matter, on a modern interstate highway in a modern car equipped with 4-wheel anti-lock brakes, overdrive and excellent modern tyres is just silly.

"So most people ignore the unrealistic speed limits and keep a keen eye out for speed traps. As time went by, most of us became very cynical and even contemptuous

The advertisement is a vertical rectangular poster. At the top, a police officer in a dark uniform and cap is shown from the chest up, holding a radar gun pointed towards the viewer. To the right of the officer, several brand names are listed vertically: Valence One, BELFRONICS, ESCORT, UNICLON, and BLINDER. Below the officer, the text reads "SPEEDING TICKET?" in large, bold, yellow letters. Underneath that, in smaller red and blue text, it says "RADAR & LASER CAN AND DOES MAKE MISTAKES. FIGHT BACK! WE SHOW HOW". The main body of the ad has a white background with the text "CALL THE RADAR PROTECTION EXPERTS" in large, bold, black letters. Below this, it says "TOLL FREE 0800-4RADAR" and "Ph: 09 528 7279 or Fax: 09 528 7279". At the bottom, the website "www.radardirect.co.nz" is listed. Three radar detector units are shown at the bottom of the ad: a small black one, a larger black one with a screen, and another black one.



about modern speed enforcement.

"The 55 mph speed inaugurated an era when limits became revenue enhancers - and the highway patrol turned into highwaymen, eroding public respect for and confidence in police forces.

"Turning cops into armed tax collectors with quotas to fill and the weight of the state to enforce it has generated enormous public antipathy towards the police, a most unfortunate thing.

"At least now that 55 is history and the 'safety' gurus have been exposed for the frauds they are, we're on our way toward saner traffic laws built on reason and sound engineering principles."

In New Zealand, the LTSA still brainwashes the media and the public. LTSA official Bill Frith:

"What's happened in the States, if you look at the states that abolished speed limits, they had bad records before the abolition and bad records after, and the states that kept low speed limits had good records before and good records after," he says.

Which is not how the US road toll figures read at all.

"I would think these unsafe states were probably ignoring their speed limits anyway," continues Frith, adding that "NHTSA did a report and sounded pretty negative about it."

All of which seems to confirm that New Zealand's road safety planners have been getting bad advice from a grumpy NHTSA.

"We've got the papers and looked at them and we're

quite satisfied that, as NHTSA said, it didn't do the road toll any good," Frith concludes.

For what its worth, the 1999 figures are in for Montana which recorded its lowest *ever* road toll, thanks to roads with no speed limits. Ironically, thanks to a court ruling, speed limits were recently reintroduced there, and the road toll is now rising again.

In addition, official NHTSA figures show 1998 was one of the safest years on record in the states, with a 1.8 % drop in highway fatalities, despite a booming economy and cheap petrol prices that year, which led to increased vehicle usage.

"Using speed limits and speed enforcement as the cornerstone of US highway safety policy is a major mistake," says the NMA's Chad Dornsife in what should also be a clear warning to New Zealand police. "It is time to accept the fact that increases in traffic speeds are the natural byproduct of advancing technology. People do, in fact, act in a reasonable and responsible manner without constant government intervention.

Readers can judge for themselves what kind of story the figures tell, so next time you see an expensive TV ad costing \$13,000 of your tax dollars, bear it in mind. The New Zealand Government makes a fortune from speeding fines, a tax they would not be able to collect if speed limits were raised to more realistic levels.





VIETNAM WARCRIES

The authors of a new book on the use of the defoliant Agent Orange in the Vietnam War allege New Zealand may have broken the Geneva Convention by helping manufacture chemical weapons. The book, *Who'll Stop The Rain?*, has just been released, and documents the efforts to gain compensation for hundreds of New Zealand Vietnam veterans and their families who have been exposed to normally rare illnesses and birth defects as a result of exposure to Agent Orange.

The defoliant was dumped by the planeload on the jungle, containing lethal chemicals like dioxin - one of the most poisonous substances on the planet. Underneath this military "topdressing", thousands of New Zealand, Australian, American and Vietnamese troops were fighting.

When they returned home, the Kiwi soldiers discovered their children were coming down with horrible defects:

one small survey shows double the national average for clubbed feet; double the number of heart defects; a whopping nine times the rate of spina bifida, eight times the rate of kidney defects and seven times the rate of Downs syndrome - to name but a few.

The veterans have been pushing their case for more than two decades, but a tame and largely ignorant New Zealand news media have done little beyond merely reporting Government denials of any link between the chemical spray and the diseases.

However, authors Deborah Challinor and Elizabeth Lancaster decided to do what New Zealand's "leading" journalists couldn't: pulling together what were in some cases deathbed stories from soldiers whose bodies are still be-

ing forced to fight the Vietnam War.

Contrast New Zealand's denials with the grim reality that exists in Vietnam today - up to 600,000 people are ill with dioxin related diseases and genetic abnormalities.

Peter Waldman, an American reporter, visited one village in 1997 that had taken a severe dusting of Agent Orange during the war:

"In one home, a 16 year old girl, less than four feet tall, cackles hysterically on the edge of a bed, her spindly legs folded beneath her. Asked where her parents are, she says, 'Dead,' raising a howl from the back of the house.

"There, her 18 year old sister, similarly deformed, lies under a mosquito net in the dark, babbling incomprehensibly. Their brother, mentally retarded but mobile, appears in the front yard. Asked his age, he replies, 'Two'.

"In a neighbouring house, 12 year old Linh Think has a fine mind but legs that won't move. She sits on the ground, sorting beans in a basket, refusing to look up."

The book alleges that the US, Australian and New Zealand governments have tried to whitewash investigations into Agent Orange for two reasons:

"I think New Zealand did manufacture, if not Agent Orange then components of Agent Orange and sent them to Vietnam," explains Challinor.

"Also the issue here is that if we let 3,500 veterans and their kids onto the benefit system because they've been affected by chemical exposure, what about all the other people in this country who've been affected as well - we use a huge amount of chemicals for our agriculture - and I just wonder if it would not be opening the floodgates."



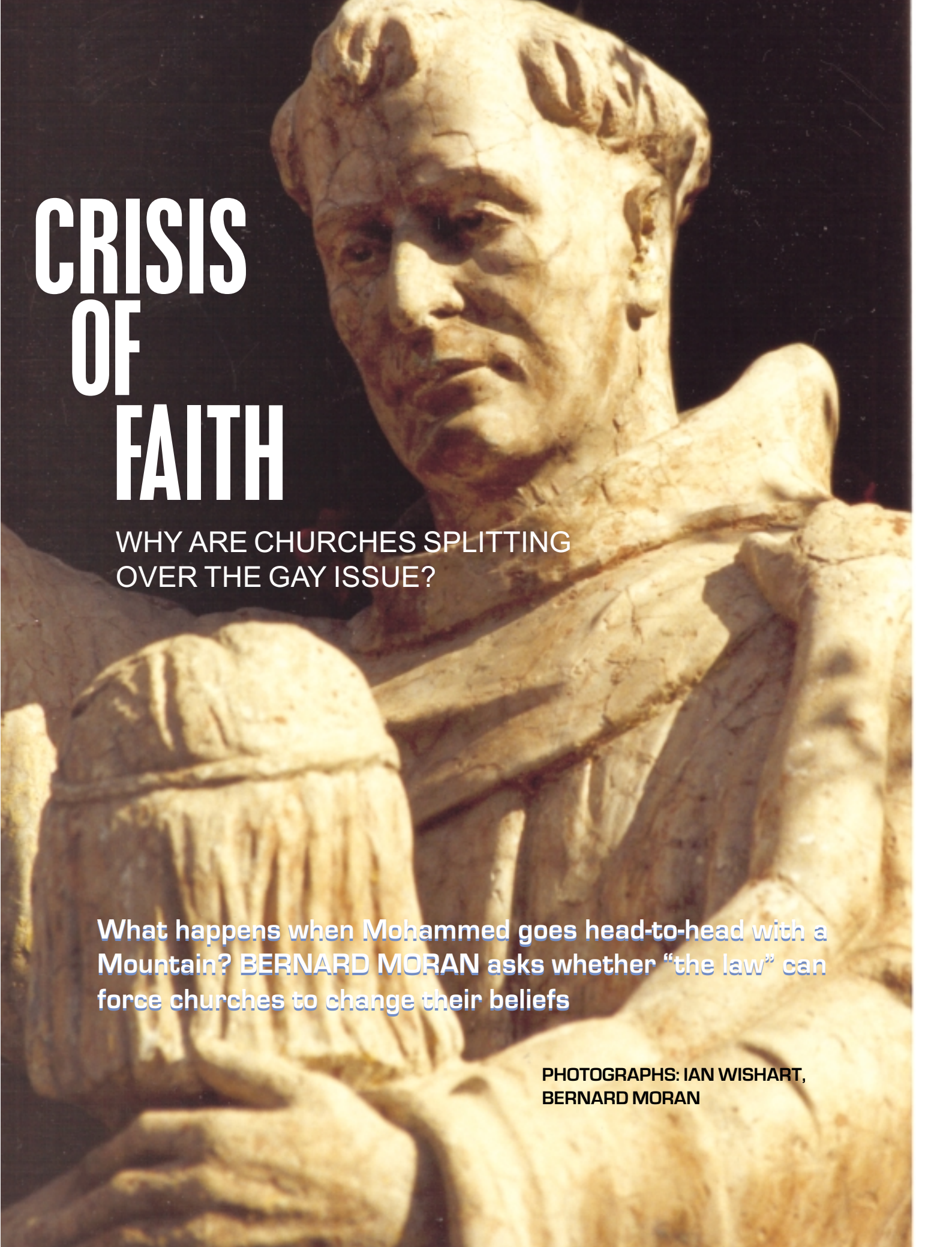
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CRISIS OF FAITH

WHY ARE CHURCHES SPLITTING
OVER THE GAY ISSUE?

What happens when Mohammed goes head-to-head with a Mountain? **BERNARD MORAN** asks whether “the law” can force churches to change their beliefs

PHOTOGRAPHS: IAN WISHART,
BERNARD MORAN

New Zealand churches are breaking apart over a fundamental issue: can the Government force churches to ordain gay priests? Gay clergy want to use the Human Rights Act to stop churches from discriminating against them, while Christian fundamentalists argue the move goes against every teaching of the Bible and makes a mockery of freedom of religion.

Already this long and bitter controversy over whether active homosexuals can be ordained ministers, has split the Methodist church in New Zealand. Methodists are walking away to join other denominations, or setting up independent churches. A similar situation exists within the Presbyterian church, although it is still holding together. Just.

Both sides, the “progressives” and the “orthodox”, battle it out at their annual conferences. The weapons are remits, motions of order, prepared submissions, speeches from the floor and lobbying. The goal, to persuade the floating delegates in the middle to choose one’s side. Emotions at times run white hot. The contenders are generally intelligent, educated people, passionately convinced of the righteousness of their stances, acting in the light of their consciences.

Many Methodist and Presbyterian delegates emerge from these conferences, mentally punch drunk from the grueling intensity of the debates and politicking. I heard of one Presbyterian minister, noted for his strength of character, attempting to give his congregation a verbal report on the General Assembly he had just attended. He gripped the lectern struggling to speak, his eyes filling with tears. For minutes he stood there, head bowed, redfaced; until members of the congregation came forward and comforted him.

This is not just a New Zealand phenomenon. It is happening in Australia, Canada, Britain and the United States. In mid-May at their Cleveland conference, delegates of the United Methodist Church with 8.4 million members, voted by 2-1 margins to reaffirm church laws banning gay-union ceremonies, the ordination of homosexual clergy and declaring homosexual activity (not orientation) incompatible with Christian teaching.

The Methodist confrontations over the active homosexual issue have been the most dramatic among mainline Christians, although similar struggles are continuing within the Episcopal Church (the US branch of Anglicanism), Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Presbyterians. Reform Rabbis voted in March to allow homosexual union services.

The Catholic Church in the USA has long had an extensive semi-underground homosexual network. Certain dioceses and their bishops have a reputation for being “gay-friendly” and this extends to recruitment and the staffing of institutions. A type of low-intensity guerilla war exists between the Vatican and some American cardinals and bishops who protect homosexually-active religious and lay Catholics in pro-gay social change groups like Dignity.

Richard John Neuhaus, one of the foremost Catholic intellectuals in America, describes the homosexual movement and its impact on contemporary American public life

and social policy as, an “organized insurgency” - a rebellion against the status quo.

To understand the “insurgency” within the Methodist church in New Zealand, we need to look at the dynamics of homosexual “gay liberation”.

Its defining moment came in 1969, when a squad of New York policemen beat up gay men quietly drinking in the Stonewall Bar. That incident sparked the movement.

The self-described term “gay”, stands for “good-as-you”. Those three words sum up what the cultural revolution over the past thirty years is all about. Being “good-as-you” (heterosexuals) entails full access to all areas and positions in public life that are currently off limits to visible homosexuals. Some ready examples: marriage, adoption, teaching positions in religious schools and the ordained church ministry.

Activists hold that this implies the status of second-class citizens for gays, of being merely tolerated by the heterosexual ascendancy. Therefore these status quos have to be challenged, to be opened up on the principle that we are as “good-as-you” and we want what you have. To be denied access is, to gays, a personal reproach, the expression of an underlying attitude that gays are not good enough, not quite full and proper citizens.

How representative are the gay activists in the vanguard? Homosexuals and lesbians are fairly diverse like the rest of the population and many just want to get on quietly with their lives. However, they appreciate that the stridency and determination of the activists advances their collective status and interests, particularly through statutory bodies like the Human Rights Commission.

For example, the process known as Consistency 2000 aims to turn the Human Rights Act 1993 into superior law. This means that all laws in New Zealand will have to conform to the Act, the ultimate arbiter and interpreter being the Court of Appeal, opening the way for judge-made so-

Many Methodist and Presbyterian delegates emerge from these conferences, mentally punch drunk from the grueling intensity of the debates and politicking

cial policy. Thus, while most New Zealanders might consider that marriage should be confined to men and women and not men with men, or women with women, the judges could rule that the current status quo with marriage discriminates against gays in terms of the Human Rights Act.

The judges could also rule that Protestant churches are discriminating against the Act by barring active homosexuals from the ordained ministry.

"After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear of Gays in the 90s", is the book that instructed gays how to wage and win the propaganda war. Witty, brilliant in its perceptions, it was a blueprint of genius.

The authors, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Marshall are New York-based gay activists and at the top in their professional field of public relations. They started from the situation in the late 1980s, where active homosexuals were identified with a number of negative public images: strange sexual practices, transmitters and carriers of HIV, dangers to public health and so on.

Kirk and Marshall argued that the key to gaining mainstream heterosexual sympathy and acceptance was for gays to portray themselves as "victims". Those who opposed the movement were to be demonised as: "bigots, homophobic (fear of homosexuals), hate-filled", to such an extent that other people would be intimidated into silence. The authors insisted that such ruthless pragmatism was necessary and justifiable, because most heterosexual opposition is motivated by hatred.

While such rhetoric certainly does have the power to intimidate, its promiscuous use over the years in the church debates, has seen it fall victim to the law of diminishing returns. Orthodox Methodists and Presbyterians have learned to absorb the verbal baseball bats of being labelled "bigots, homophobes, hate filled" and carry on with what they were saying.

Behind the push for gay ordination is a radical new kind of Protestantism. There has always been a strong liberal tradition promoting peace and justice issues within the Methodist church. But this is something different, more radical, more political and absolute. The latter word is crucial, radical Protestants like their orthodox opponents believe in Divine Revelation - in certain situations. They believe that God has a special heart for gays as an oppressed minority - and He/

She wants them ordained to bring their special gifts into the Methodist Church of New Zealand.

How do we know all this? For the past thirty years, the American United Methodist Church has been debating this issue of homosexual ordination with growing intensity. The arguments, the type of people involved on both sides and in the middle, are similar to the Methodist Church in New Zealand.

In 1998, a scholar William Abraham, Professor of Wesley Studies at the Southern Methodist University, posted a careful analysis of the forces at work in the United Methodist Church on the internet. It was published and distributed here by Methodists who believe that the analysis reflects reality here.

Professor Abraham's key points on the liberal position:

*Christian pluralism means to be absolute that there is no divine revelation that delivers genuine knowledge of God. We are on a journey of searching, of exploring expressions of God. The content of Christian doctrine can change at any point in history, because doctrine springs from the method and culture of the day.

* Certain minority groups are designated victims of oppression (in NZ Methodism: women, Maori and gays) and are consequently assigned a privileged position. Their experiences of oppression are seen as visible expressions of the reign of God. Anything which questions these experiences is strictly unacceptable. The diverse convictions, ideologies and discourses of the new politically correct groups are accorded great respect.

* Liberal Methodist leaders of the past generation have anguished over the rejection of critical inquiry, courtesy and academic standards. The new scholarship is subjective, radical and political. The divisions that first appeared in academic circles gradually spread into the life of the church.

* Adherents of the "new orthodoxy" are driven by a missionary zeal to transform the church and the world.

* The heart of the matter is that orthodox Methodists cannot accept in all conscience, the "new orthodoxy" that homosexual and lesbian sexual activity and relationships are an entirely legitimate expression of God's good and diverse creation. Both sides reject any compromise. Also, few of the "new orthodox" accept that the Bible is authori-



Rev David Bromell: "We bonk to the Glory of God".

tative, or that Jesus Christ is the sole way of salvation. How can both sides coexist in the same church?

Before going into the history of the dispute, it would assist *Investigate* readers if the term “Evangelical” was explained. It will crop up time and time again and we need to understand what it means in this context.

First there was the dynamic Evangelical Awakening of the eighteenth century, led by John and Charles Wesley. After World War II, evangelicals emerged again with leaders like Billy Graham, believing that Christians should be intellectually strong, culturally literate, socially engaged and cooperative in spirit. Evangelicals stress personal conversion (“being born again”), activism (both evangelistic and social), biblical authority and the centrality of the Cross.

The opening skirmish occurred at the 1990 Methodist Church Conference in Dunedin with a major debate about the acceptability of active homosexuals in the ordained ministry. David Bromell, a former Baptist minister, was openly gay and wanted full recognition as a Methodist minister. He enjoyed the general support of the Methodist leadership. However, evangelicals had grouped together as Methodist Affirm arguing that “receiving” David Bromell was unacceptable and would compromise the theology and integrity of evangelical and orthodox Methodists.

The 1991 Conference in Wanganui was mainly devoted to the issue, with speech after speech, notices of motions and intense lobbying. The Rev Ashley Sedon stood up and declared his homosexuality. Evangelicals again stated their inability to accept such a new morality for ordained ministers, but did not seek any disciplinary action against Rev Sedon.

The evangelicals were further alarmed when David Bromell and Rev Evan Lewis questioned the Trinity in their 1991 work *Faithful and Free*: “We would have misgivings about the Trinity. This kind of doctrine creates more problems than it solves.”

But the manure really hit the fan in 1998 when the Rev Dr David Bromell wrote a column on sexuality entitled *Abstinence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder*, for the Canterbury University Orientation Magazine. Here is a selection of his advice to students:

* “When a man and woman have sex, they are fulfilling the divine in human existence. We bonk to the glory of God.”

* “Some of us meet by having great sex first, and then get to know one another later.”

* “You’re the best person to decide what’s right for you, right now. It’s OK to say ‘No’. It’s OK to say ‘Yes’.”

The 1993 Conference in Christchurch debates the issue again. A leader, the Rev Merv Dine moves from the floor that the Methodist Church should order its life according



Rev Richard Waugh: The radical liberals who now control the Methodist Church are clearly at odds with mainstream Christian practice

to the intent of the new Human Rights Act. Some evangelicals support this, believing that the Act gives religious groups the right not to accept homosexuality or other controversial moral matters if it contravenes their Church doctrine. Many liberals interpret this decision as allowing practising homosexuals into ordained ministry.

The 1997 Conference in Wellington is a bitter affair with the evangelicals and Pacific Island delegates struggling to stop David Bromell being ordained. The Conference breaches its usual consensus decision-making procedures



and decides by a majority vote (64% for - 36% against) to bring Rev Bromell to full reception and agrees that the Faith and Order Committee should explore blessing ceremonies for same-sex relationships.

The Conference also decides to establish a President's Commission for those who cannot live with the controversial decisions. Directly after this Conference, the Wesleyan Methodist Movement (WMM) is formed to coordinate evangelicals and some Fijian, Samoan and Tongan parties.

Because of the Conference decisions, three ministers and 150 members (half of Blenheim and most of Red Beach churches) immediately leave the Methodist Church.

During 1998, a further three ministers and 450 members (half of Birkenhead, half of Shirley Christchurch, 30 adults from Papakura, all of Havelock North, half of Opawa Christchurch and most of St Stephens in Tauranga) move out. Some of these congregations make moves to lease their buildings from the national Church.

Throughout 1998, the WMM employs a flying Pastor-at-Large, Rev Tavake Tupou (a former President of the Church) to minister to hurting congregations throughout the country. Rev Tupou has to rely only on WMM funding, in the face of

opposition from the Methodist Church and its leaders.

Meanwhile, the President's Commission proposes a national Evangelical Synod, where evangelicals can exercise some control of ministry training and appointments. This is followed by a Covenant affirming the place of evangelicals in the Methodist Church.

However, at the 1999 Conference in Auckland there is more trouble. The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and supporters group and Te Taha Maori stated that they "cannot live with the establishment of an Evangelical Synod."

A lesbian candidate for ordained ministry from Manukau is accepted for training despite no support from the Manukau Synod. The Faith and Order Committee inform Conference that they will soon have a liturgy service available for the blessing of same-sex relationships.

Frustration at Conference's failure to confirm the Evangelical Synod, leads to more defections, six ministers and around 600 members (the rest of Opawa, most of Greenmeadows Napier and more Samoan and Fijian congregations). Further congregations give notice that they are considering their future: half of Wesley Papatoetoe, Wesley Hastings, Henderson, Massey, Pakuranga and Howick South.

The fallout from the 1999 Conference continues where by May 2000, twelve ministers and more than 1200 members have left the Methodist Church.

In a statement circulated at the 1999 Conference, gay and lesbian members reminded delegates that many of them could not yet identify themselves, but they were "everywhere".

"We do not and have not sought special rights for ourselves, or a separate place to be safe within the Methodist Church of NZ. We have sought to be safe **everywhere** (their emphasis) within the church, because **we are everywhere**. We have sought to participate freely and equally as baptised members of the Body of Christ in the life of

"To establish any structure (for example, a synod) within the church, in which discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion of gays and lesbians can freely occur, stands totally against our 1993 Conference decision that **we, as a whole church, would live by the intent of the Human Rights Act.**"

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“To establish any structure (for example, a synod) within the church, in which discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion of gays and lesbians can freely occur, stands totally against our 1993 Conference decision that **we**, as a **whole** church, would live by the intent of the Human Rights Act.”

“We are open to exploring with the whole church, other options for a way forward that will enable us to remain in one Conference, for **we are everywhere**. A bottom line for us is recognition and respect for the leadership and ministry of **all** people who are in full connexion with the Conference, and who are appointed to positions of leadership and responsibility.”

The Methodist split became official on July 2nd with the launching of the breakaway faction, the Wesleyan Meth-

the whole church.” Addressing the idea of an Evangelical Synod, the statement said: “As we understand it, the evangelical family of Methodists has sought a space within the life of the Conference, within which lesbian and gay people may not be able to participate fully and equally. We seek clarification and assurance as how an Evangelical Synod will honour decisions made in past Conferences regarding the safety, integrity and ministry of lesbian and gay in the Synod

odist Church of NZ, at Auckland. “What we are trying to do,” explained Rev Edgar Hornblow: “is offer an alternative for evangelicals who cannot accept the leadership of practising homosexual clergy and extreme bi-cultural criteria as the benchmark of all decisions.”

“The radical liberals who now control the Methodist Church are clearly at odds with mainstream Christian practice and tradition,” says the Reverend Richard Waugh, of Trinity Church in Auckland’s Howick Pakuranga, one of the largest Methodist churches in NZ, and one of the leading evangelicals.

“At Trinity we have four vibrant congregations and we are currently working our way through a process to determine our own future. It is clearly evident that virtually all our under-40 year olds are opposed to the current directions of the Methodist Church. Liberal and radical theology has failed to capture a whole generation of young Christians and the sad consequence is that the Methodist Church speaks increasingly to a very grey audience.”

“Most of those leaving have been younger people, which has contributed to the aging demographic of the remaining Church. In 1993, I completed a master degree at Auckland University and part of the project involved surveying the average age of Methodist members, at that stage the average was 56 years. There are about 10,000 active members within the Methodist Church and 5,000 in Co-operating Ventures.”

Investigate talked with Rev Dr David Bromell about where he sees the future direction for the gay, lesbian and bisexual members. “We don’t see ourselves pushing for a special place within the Church. What we are seeking is full participation as agreed at the 1993 Conference, that is the Church ordering its life according to the intent of the Human Rights Act. That has always been - and is at present, the status quo.”

So the Methodist Church continues on its journey into the uncharted waters of the 21st century, seeking unity in its diversity. But the current realities echo the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew, Chapter 12 vs 25: “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.”



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