

CENTENNIAL HALL

Built By Maoris At
Morven

Achievement Praised

Yesterday for the Maoris at Morven was a red letter day, as a Centennial Memorial Hall built through their efforts was officially opened. Mr E. T. Tirikatene, M.P., and the Mayor of Waimate (Mr G. Dash) were the principal speakers, and both congratulated the Maoris on their achievement. The raising of money to build the hall was carried out by a women's committee. The builder (Mr J. Scoringe), a resident of the district, gave 75 per cent of the labour free, and of further assistance was a Government centennial grant.

"During many years the Maori people of Morven and Glenavy have thought about building a hall," said Mr J. Heath, who presided. "They have struggled on and struggled on, and now with your help they have built it." As chairman of the Maori people of the district, he wished to thank everyone sincerely. Without the help of the Waimate County Council and that of the riding member (Mr R. Sinclair) in particular, the building of the hall could not have been achieved. "We as Maori people thank you very much and very sincerely," he added.

"I know it has been a little difficult to follow my remarks in our own language," said Mr Tirikatene after addressing the gathering in Maori. "It is customary, and it is one of the very rare treasures we of the younger generation have had handed down from our elders." He went on to say that he had referred to the fact that the Centennial Memorial Hall would take the place of Council walls. He had greeted those who had spoken, and he had praised the energy put into the work of building the hall. The achievement would be written down in the memory of the Maori people for many a long day.

Mr Tirikatene mentioned the troublous times through which the world was passing, and he exhorted everyone to be brave with those boys from New Zealand, Maori and Pakeha, and know that victory was close at hand. Courage must be taken from the fact that right must be right. "I know the troubles we have had," he said. "Our elders have gone down to sleep hoping that some day there would here stand a meeting house." Calling the hall a centennial memorial portrayed 100 years of brotherhood between Maori and Pakeha. He mentioned how the Maoris had fought in the South African War, then in the Great War with their Pakeha comrades. Now side by side they were thrown into the jaws of war to get peace, good will and freedom. The hall being opened that day was a true monument of brotherhood. It might look small beside some of the Pakehas great halls, but it meant much to the Maori people and more particularly to the people of Morven who had one of the best pias in the South Island.

Two of Mr Tirikatene's small daughters sang in Maori a song dedicated to the opening of the hall. They hoped that the sun might shine down on Morven.

Mr Dash said it was a pleasure to him to listen to Mr Tirikatene as one whose voice rang through the legislative chambers of New Zealand with such effect that he had become known to everyone present, even though some had only met him for the first time that day. He proceeded to say that the hall was a difficult achievement for the Morven Maori community, and he particularly praised the work of the women's committee, and complimented the chairwoman (Mrs J. Heath). He said he looked back on the days when the Maoris had assisted in Waimate with the celebration of the eightieth anniversary of the arrival of the first white man. Mrs Heath had written a poem in connection with the jubilee of the Waimate Borough. He looked back with great admiration on the Maoris in Waimate. They had made a treaty with the first white man (Michael Studholme) when he arrived in the district. Through all the years they had stood by that treaty. "We hold in respect the Maoris of this community," he said, "as their word is their bond." One thing that had stood by the Maori was a strong gift of humour, and Mr Dash concluded by relating a number of amusing anecdotes.

Mr H. Wixon, the oldest member of the Maori race in the district, officially opened the hall and handed to the builder, Mr J. Scoringe, a greenstone memento of the occasion.

"During the time I have worked on the hall I have thought of my own people," said Mr Scoringe. "They have consistently lived in this district for more than 100 years." He mentioned that at one stage four generations of his family had been working on the hall.

Afternoon tea was set out on tables inside the hall, which was brilliantly decorated with red, white and blue as the basis. At the conclusion of that part of the opening ceremony, Mr Tirikatene paid a tribute to the way the whole function had been organised. "It has been wonderfully got up," he said, "quiet in its quietness, but rich in its dignity." He also congratulated Mr Dash on the joviality he had associated with the ceremony.

In the course of the ceremony, small Maori girls presented bouquets to Mrs Dash, Mrs Tirikatene, Mrs Hera Selwyn (the oldest living Maori woman in the pa), Mrs T. Jacobs (a sister of Mrs Selwyn's) and Mrs Heath.

Two Commendable Features

There are two commendable features connected with the building of the hall. One was that the task of raising the money was undertaken by a committee of women: Mesdames J. Heath (chairwoman), W. Tamaru (secretary), W. Thomas, R. Scoringe, T. Heath and Misses S. Selwyn (treasurer) and R. Tamaru. The cost of erecting the hall was £422 and helped by a centennial grant from the Government the debt now remaining is only £122. An important point was that the builder gave 75 per cent of his labour free. In explaining why he had done so much voluntary work, which had also been done by his father and son, Mr Scoringe said he had found pleasure in building the hall in view of the fact that he was a member of one of the few original families. He had been told that 100 years ago one of his ancestors had built the first grass hut in the district, and he had now built the Centennial Hall. The greenstone pendant Mr Scoringe received is more than 100 years old.

The hall is 45 feet long and 20 feet