



major reform of our taxation system would also be necessary.

Collectivism is a powerful concept in the Māori world. At its core, it is informed by whakapapa and is driven by a relationship dynamic, sometimes described as whanaungatanga, that connects all things in the world, seen and unseen. Relevant Western worldview values emphasise the contemporary importance of relationships between people and groups. This takes us beyond transactional communication which still dominates the direction and style of human discourse in our public space.

Relationships thinking and practice from a Western worldview perspective, while different from collectivism as seen from a Māori worldview, does provide the ground on which two parties can effectively explore matters of common interest and concern, with respect, while maintaining their mana tangata.

This view is reflected by Matike Mai Aotearoa – the Independent Working Group on Constitutional Transformation in relation to shared governance. Convened by Professor Margaret Mutu and Moana Jackson, the group published in 2016 *He Whakaaro Here Whakaumau Mō Aotearoa*.<sup>2</sup> This report included governance proposals based primarily on values drawn from the 1835 He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nui Tirenī and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The report's authors emphasised values and a desire to have a more open constitution based on a more conciliatory and consensual democracy rather than an adversarial and majoritarian one.

The two referenda that we are being presented with in this year's General Election provide a case study of monocultural individualism that needs to end. If we were to engage the alternative collective practice proposed by Matike Mai Aotearoa, we would see a Māori process used to address the two issues being canvassed; this would involve seeking majority support, not just from the electorate, but also support from a clear majority of iwi and hapū.

The other major reform that would need to be grappled with is the whole question of taxation. As a country we have one of the most regressive income tax systems of any OECD nation. Anyone earning over \$70,000 a year is paying the marginal rate of income tax of 33%. This applies equally to those earning millions of dollars a year, except the rich more often than not can take advantage of various legal methods to reduce their already low rate of tax. Such methods are not open to the average wage or salary earner who is taxed through PAYE. As a minimum there is a need for at least four or more additional income tax rates with a top marginal rate of at least 70%.

But income is not the only contributor to inequality in Aotearoa; wealth is as important, if not more important, as the so-called rent economy continues to

expand. We are one of the very few OECD countries not to have a capital gains tax and we also have<sup>2</sup> no inheritance taxes. Occasionally a political party will put its head above the parapet and suggest some form of wealth tax but the cries from the very rich and powerful soon seem to drown out the arguments in favour. The last Government had a high-powered group look at various<sup>2</sup> changes to the tax system. Their recommendations, conservative at best,<sup>2</sup> were met with the usual howls of protest from the very rich and it was not possible to get any agreement between the Coalition partners to make progress. Our next Government needs to be<sup>2</sup> much braver.

Is it unreasonable to dream of an Aotearoa where all families have warm, clean, dry places to live, and do<sup>2</sup> not have to worry about how to pay for food or all the other necessities<sup>2</sup> of dignified life? Where individuals can follow their dreams, be it inventing a better gadget, painting pictures, writing books, or<sup>2</sup> performing music? A society where the essential workers are not just adequately paid but treated as<sup>2</sup> we currently treat the very rich managers in our<sup>2</sup> society?

Is it unreasonable to dream of an Aotearoa that does not contribute tons of carbon dioxide and methane<sup>2</sup> to the atmosphere every day? Where sustainable living is accepted as not just necessary but the wise and sensible way to live?

Is it unreasonable to dream of an Aotearoa where each and every child has an equal chance of receiving the best possible education? Where teachers are really valued, where a person can be rewarded as much for the skill of their hands as for the skill of their brains?

Is it unreasonable to dream of an Aotearoa where access to healthcare is dependent on need, not ability<sup>2</sup> to pay? A healthcare system that recognises and accepts the multiplicity of cultural practices that make up our society?

Is it unreasonable to dream of an Aotearoa where all beliefs are valued and respected and followers of one religion do not despise or criticise the followers of other religions? Where all live in peace and accept everyone as their neighbour?

Is it unreasonable to dream of an Aotearoa where Te Tiriti o Waitangi is not just paid lip service but where there is a real partnership? A real working together, of not just of Māori and Pākehā but of all ethnic groups; where we practise the skill of working with differences<sup>2</sup> and pride ourselves in coming up with workable solutions at all levels of society to the way we govern ourselves, and manage our education and healthcare<sup>2</sup> systems in ways that are both creative and sustainable.

UBI captures some of the important elements of our current dreams. It could be an important way for us to begin work to overcome the crippling effects of the social and spiritual isolation we suffer at present.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/MatikeMaiAotearoaReport.pdf>