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Four Pillars

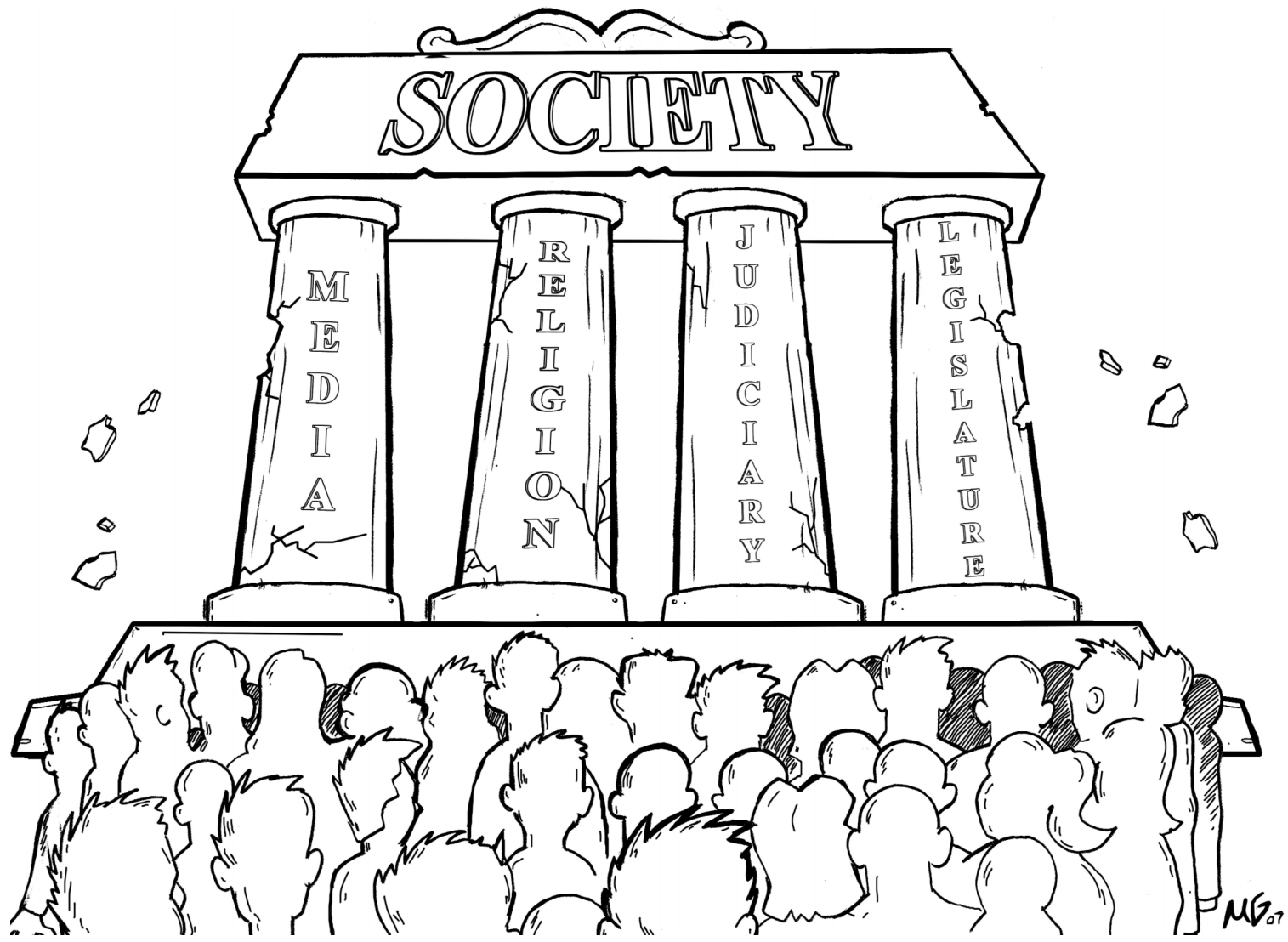
In a world where freedom is often taken for granted, New Zealand is a small nation that stands up for what it believes.

But is everything as healthy as it seems?

Over the next four editions, *Te Waha Nui* will examine the four pillars of New Zealand society – media, church, judiciary and legislature – and ask tough questions about their integrity.

This edition tackles journalism – traditionally heralded as a necessity for democracy.

Just what is the state of New Zealand journalism?



Journalists to review public service role, ethics code

By Justin Henehan

A series of wide-ranging resolutions have emerged from a landmark summit on the state of journalism in New Zealand.

The summit, organised by the Engineering, Printing, and Manufacturing Union (EPMU), was attended by journalists, media academics and industry representatives.

The resolutions put forward by the EPMU are intended to fortify the broadcast and print media in the face of increasing pressures on journalism from overseas ownership and a changing technological landscape.

The state of New Zealand journalism will be reviewed over the next six months by the EPMU in conjunction with journalism schools.

The review will consider union membership, public service broadcasting, the growing pressure on journalists to become competent in multiple areas of media, and the effects of commercial pressures and low pay rates on journalism.

The union also agreed to a public review of the EPMU's code of ethics for journalists.

The conference called for the Government to be lobbied to increase tax based funding of TVNZ. It is hoped this will shield it from commercial pressures and fulfil the terms of the TVNZ charter.

"We should not shrink from the cost of democracy, which includes taxpayer funding of public media," said EPMU delegate and summit organiser Simon Collins.

A review on the state of news media in New Zealand was also called for.

The vote was passed to establish a nationwide movement for democratic media, open to the public, linking local news websites and other media committed to public issues.

Union support in the South Pacific region for journalists who work under threat will be increased.

The next six months will also see public submissions sought for the review of the journalists' code of ethics.

Those present were urged to call public meetings in each district within the next two months.

AUT associate professor and journalism curriculum leader Martin Hirst says involving the public in the review process will be vital to building journalism credibility in New Zealand.

The first of several meetings will be held on Wednesday, August 22 at 7pm on floor 15 of the AUT Tower, corner of Rutland St and Wakefield St.

EPMU Resolutions

- **Lead a public review of the state of New Zealand journalism**
- **Review the Journalists' Code of Ethics. Public submissions will be sought. The code needs to be updated to take new technology into account**
- **Increase taxpayer funding of TVNZ to a level that allows it to become a true public service broadcaster**
- **Urge everyone concerned about democratic media to create new media outets, committed to providing information about public issues and facilitating an exchange of ideas**
- **Support funding of investigative journalism on important public issues**
- **Establish a movement for democratic media, open to all New Zealanders. Create, support and link local websites, and other media outlets reporting on public issues, and campaign for publicly funded broadcasting**

Calls for a more diverse industry

By Joanna Davies

The keynote speaker at the EPMU's *Journalism Matters* conference wants an audit of how journalism schools are selecting their students.

Dr Judy McGregor, Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner, says the proportions of minority groups working in the industry should be a matter of high concern and student selection processes should reflect this.

"The results are embarrassing.

"The proportion of Maori, Pacific Island and Asian in newsrooms is pitifully low, and this has been a structural, systemic problem for decades."

DR JUDY MCGREGOR

In the 2006 census, 83 per cent of journalists were Pakeha or of European descent.

Nearly a third of people living in New Zealand are of Maori, Pacific Island and Asian descent.

Dr McGregor says the issue needs to be addressed at journalism schools, where the diversity intake is a problem.

Jim Tucker, executive director of the Journalists Training Organisation (JTO), says there are difficulties when recruiting students from Maori, Pacific and Asian backgrounds.

He says many families want school leavers to enter professions like law.

"We must convince people that journalism is a worthy career."

Of 250 students studying journalism at the 11 schools in the country, only one is of Asian descent, says Tucker.

"There has been a rapid growth of Asian media with Asian language newspapers for their communities, and this is an area of opportunity to train more people from Asian backgrounds."

The area of most concern for Tucker is the numbers of Pacific Island students training at journalism schools.

Only 4 per cent of journalism students in the JTO survey were of Pacific Island descent. The last census showed 9 per cent of the population was made up of Pacific Islanders.

"Maori have a journalism school at Waiariki Institute of Technology where the focus is on Maori issues, but there is no school for Pacific Island students at an entry level.

"There are voices not being heard, and this has an impact on a group's position in society."

The JTO wants to talk with Pacific Island communities to encourage school leavers to consider journalism as a career.

Associate professor David Robie, an AUT journalism lecturer, says while the statistics are concerning, there are some positive things happening.

"In the Bachelor of Communication Studies degree there are about 800 students, and our figures match with the Census figures. The problem is in journalism."

Dr Robie says the school has held workshops for Pacific Island and Maori high school students, which were well received.

"Those who were interested in journalism have become more interested after the workshops."