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MAORITANGA

In Switzerland we have four languages, namely German, French, Italian and Romansch. Children are taught at an early age two of those four, depending in what district they live and go to school. They speak their own dialect in their homes, taught by their parents and on their first day at school have to start learning a new language.

Youngsters learn so easily while they are children and I cannot see why our Pakeha children should not be taught Maori. We ask our Maori children to speak English, why should they, who after all were here first, not have the same right and ask us to learn Maori?

If Maori and Pakeha could converse in their own respective language, today's existing problems between them would largely disappear. And why should one culture have to be absorbed by the other? Looking at our so-called superior white race today, I think we could gain a great deal from the basic principles and culture of the Maori race. But first we must learn our languages to be able to talk together.

Once walking across a bridge, I saw an elderly Maori, wearing the Moko, coming towards me. Getting nearer he looked shortly at me and then when passing, he looked me in the eyes and said: Tena Koe. I felt uncommonly proud, that he should have considered me good enough to be greeted by him in his own language.

Arnold Biland.