

12 March 2012

Hon Bill English
Deputy Prime Minister

Hon Dr Pita R Sharples
Minister of Māori Affairs

Dear Ministers

CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENCE GROUP NOMINEE

We acknowledge the invitation to nominate a New Zealand First member to be part of this group but we will not be doing so because it is a sham concocted by the National and Maori Parties as part of their coalition deal.

New Zealand has a proud democratic tradition. It beggars belief that two political parties, who are supposed to have the interests of the people at heart, should stoop to dragging our constitutional rights before a committee the composition of which most political parties had no say in. Where is the integrity and good faith surrounding the establishment of a constitutional review process that all New Zealanders need to be involved in?

New Zealand First does want to see a comprehensive review of New Zealand's constitutional arrangements, as this is long overdue. But we will not take part in such a review if its terms of reference include the proposition that any New Zealand constitution will incorporate the Treaty of Waitangi as a cornerstone.

New Zealand First accepts that the Treaty has a special place in our country's history, and that this endures today as a means for continuing and developing constructive relationships with Māori across a wide area of government. This does not extend however to the country's constitutional settings, and nor should it form part of any review of them.

The current review proposal cannot be taken seriously as a genuine and comprehensive review of New Zealand's constitution. It is nothing more than a political stunt by the National and Māori parties to try to hoodwink Maori voters into believing something is being done for them while in reality they are being dumped on an economic and social scrapheap.

This lopsided exercise is only playing politics with what should be a comprehensive process to review the constitution following wide ranging public consultation.

We believe this process should "start from the bottom" and should not be imposed by two political parties as part of their marriage of convenience.

Should a serious and transparent future review be proposed without incorporating the Treaty of Waitangi sideshow then New Zealand First will reconsider its decision not to participate.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Winston Peters', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Leader
New Zealand First