

New Zealand First backs Upokorehe

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TE Upokorehe Treaty Claims Trust says it is delighted New Zealand First voted against the Tuhoe-Te Urewera Bill in Parliament during its second reading last week.

New Zealand First leader Winston Peters said the party did not dispute the correctness of the bill, only the boundaries of the settlement.

"We commend the New Zealand First leader Winston Peters for having the courage to speak out against such an unjust bill," Upokorehe kaumatua Wallace Aramoana said.

"This is exactly what Te Upokorehe has been protesting about" said trustee

Pomare Edwards.

In a statement following the vote, New Zealand First said it believed and supported the bill's merit but was concerned that some Maori might not have been heard during negotiations to achieve the Tuhoe settlement.

"Legitimate iwi, who were recognised by respected parliamentarian Sir Apirana Ngata, have had their claims sidelined," party leader Winston Peters said.

"New Zealand First voted against the bill's second reading in Parliament today because of this serious omission in the legislation.

"We are not disputing the correctness of Tuhoe's claims, but the boundaries of the settlement."

If the Te Urewera-Tuhoe Bill was



Winston Peters,
New Zealand First
leader

passed unchanged, all chance to seek redress for past wrongs to other concerned iwi would be closed off, Mr Peters said.

"The Government has maintained that all the historical claims of Tuhoe will be settled by the passage into law of this bill, which is not the point here.

"The point is that another iwi's legitimate claims have been, by this process,

sidelined."

It was not sound law to create a new wrong while trying to fix another wrong, Mr Peters said.

Mr Edwards said Upokorehe's claim had yet to be heard by the Waitangi Tribunal and an important High Court decision with implications for the Tuhoe settlement, due out soon, had yet to be considered.

"Yet Parliament have chosen to ignore the implications of this as they don't want to rock the boat in election year," Mr Edwards said.

"Te Upokorehe will continue to fight for their rights on this bill. As it is election year, all claimants prejudiced by the Treaty claims process can put pressure on Parliament for change," he said.