

A New Horizon . . .



Man Who Sees Cultural Renaissance of a Race in Commercial Broadcasting

Special To The "Record"
by

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*ARI PITAMA.
... Balance and keen
appreciation of the
problems of the Maori
race.*

"The Maori is entering it with head erect, in the knowledge that the development of his race has now been advanced by at least 25 years."

ARI PITAMA has frank, enlightened views too on the question of intermarriage.

THERE is a man in the South Island who sees far more than snappy entertainment in commercial broadcasting. He sees in it the beginning of a cultural renaissance. Sounds queer?

It is. But, for all of that, there is more than the germ of truth and reality in his vision. He is not concerned with advertising in the home, jazz, serial "thrillers," politics and all the rest . . . he is concerned with the vocational opportunities given members of his race by the commercial broadcasting stations of New Zealand. The visionary is Ari Pitama, Maori announcer of Station 3ZB, Christchurch.

"THE Commercial Broadcasting Service," he said, in a recent interview with a "Radio Record" representative, "has given the Maori a new horizon. It has given him the opportunity to meet the pakeha on an equal economic ground. It has done much to break down real tribal barriers, to stimulate interest in and preserve the traditional music and history of the race."

"The whole point is that the Maori, with his passionate, inherited love of music and rhythm, is, through the agency of radio, able to enter a remunerative profession and one with a congenial background."

"He cannot fail to respond to such an environment. It is the experience of the Native Affairs Department that the Maori is not yet ready to compete with the pakeha in commercial life, particularly on the executive side. But the day is coming when he will be fit. I could tell you of one or two very alert young Maoris who have lately been sent overseas for experience by local business concerns."

"I am tired of listening to people who think of the Maori only as an arm-punching, hip-swinging singer. He is something very much more than that, if people will only give him the opportunity to develop responsible citizenship in his own way and in professions with which he can cope."

"Commercial radio has opened the door of opportunity."

"I believe such marriages, when normally contracted, are all for the best," he said firmly. "Such unions combine the innate sense, and beauty of rhythm, and the poetic imagery that has come down the ages to the Maori, with the more typically western virtues of the pakeha. Pomare, Ellison and Buck are the perfect examples."

Ari Pitama is a competent and eloquent spokesman of his race's viewpoint. At one time or another, he has addressed virtually every organisation in Christchurch.

A PUPIL of Christ's College, he later studied at the Canterbury Theological College, taking orders in 1924. He spent three years in missionary work, and later also a post as headmaster of Ratana School (near Wanganui). He was later a member of the advertising and literary staff of the Manawatu "Standard."

Returning eventually to Christchurch, he was given charge of the Maori Land Development Scheme at Tuahiwi.

University training, backed by contact with commerce and industry, has given him balance and keen appreciation of native problems. He has founded a branch of the W.E.A. for his people, dramatised Maori history in a number of radio features, including one commemorating the fall of Kaiapoi, when Te Pura was captured by a northern chief.

Shortly before their departure for England, Lord and Lady Bledisloe were presented by Ari Pitama, with a magnificently carved high-backed chair, on behalf of the South Island Maoris.

In the course of his reply, Lord Bledisloe said: "In my long experience of public affairs, I do not think I have ever heard so eloquent an address as that delivered by Mr. Pitama."

Nor is Lord Bledisloe the only person who has expressed appreciation of this very popular Maori announcer: thousands of listeners all over New Zealand have endorsed him time after time. Ari Pitama is, indeed, a fine vindication of his own contention—that the Maori is far more than an arm-punching, hip-swinging singer. He is a man of immense and noble possibilities.

The Perfect Example