

RADIO WILL TELL THE STORY

By JACK DAW

I HONESTLY believe that radio is going to make at least one unique contribution to New Zealand's Centennial of 1940. Curiously, this particular contribution I have in mind is going to be made by the commercial broadcasting service.

And, for fear that thin-skinned people should take this as a veiled sneer at the commercial service, I had better make plain here and now that the fact is curious merely because the commercial stations are admittedly established more for commercial reasons than cultural ones.

Still more curiously, this particular contribution is not going to be made by ourselves—New Zealand's white lords.

It is going to be made by the race that the lords of New Zealand outnumbered and overpowered. It will be made by the race who owned the land before we bought it—if one can dignify ten shillings an acre, or a blanket, or a few coloured beads with the name of purchase money.

The Maori, through radio, is going to tell his history of New Zealand.

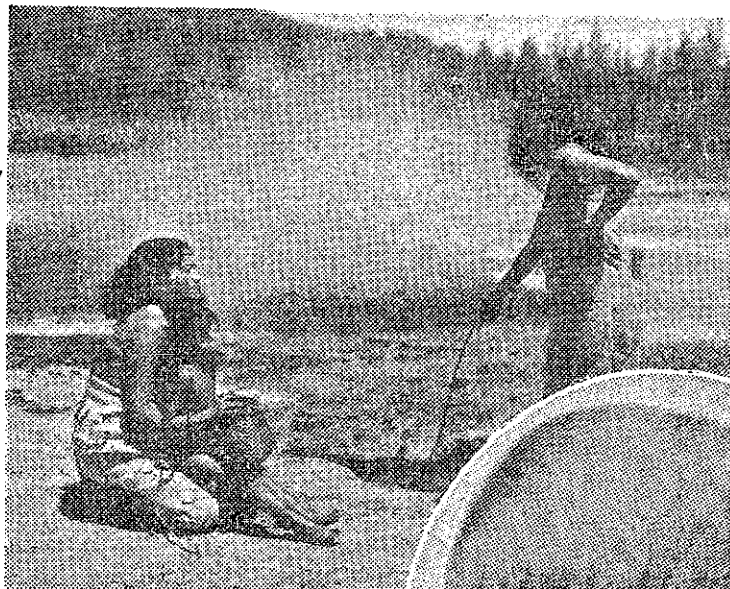
tell the story of his race from the days of the Polynesian migration in 1340 to 1350, through the days of Tasman and Cook and the first European settlement, and the days of the Maori wars, right up to the close of the nineteenth century.

That sounds very much history-book style. What writers of other years would have called the "gentle reader" will now be tempted to give a sigh, and go on to some more spicy article in the "Record." The whole thing will now have transported him back to the dreary classroom of his childhood.

Just here is where I take up the challenge. At this point I am going to ask the reader to listen to Oriwa's history, to the small slice of it that he told me last week, and which I put down here as well as I am able.

YOU are to imagine us, Oriwa and myself, a "Record" reporter, sitting in an underground room before a desk in the building of the headquarters of the Commercial Broadcasting Service, in Wellington. Upstairs girls are hammering at typewriters that make a ferocious clatter; station officials are thinking up smart ideas to get twentieth century revenue; men and women of the general public are staring through the plate-glass window that is called the "goldfish bowl" behind which an announcer is talking perhaps of swing music or hats, or something that is good for tired, city-worn nerves.

On the yellow varnished desk at which Oriwa sits talking to me there is a blotter, a wire letter basket, and an untidy heap of papers. Somebody's cap is in a pigeonhole alongside. From outside comes the noise of the city trams. (Cont. on next page)



LEFT: Tonga Awhikau, Maori chief and orator, kinsman of the famous fighting Titokowaru, is keenly interested in preserving old legend and tradition. Oriwa is his godson.
—Spencer Digby photo

BELOW: The old Maori crafts have lately been revived in many districts.
—Gov. Publicity Dept. photo.

... Nature cooked their food for them.

—Gov. Publicity Dept. photo.

IN itself, this is amazingly interesting. The history of New Zealand, up till now, has been told by the white men. They have been honest as far as they could see.

But, naturally, they haven't been able to see as far as into the mind of the Maori. The mind of the Maori, often living uneasily in the present and still hedged around with the thoughts of his past when he was free to roam the bush and fields and bays unhampered by white men's laws, has been a secret to white historians.

It is, in fact, the one thing that the Maori has been able to keep inviolate and entirely his own.

For New Zealand's Centennial, the Maori is going to reveal his view of the history of a country that is more his than our own

IN a series of radio playlets—built up on similar lines to the well-known series "Coronets of England"—Oriwa Haddon, Maori announcer to 2ZB, will

