

Te karere is flying solo

Charlton Clark

They say you can't buy a beer in the Ruatoria pub between 5.55 and 6pm.

The reason is 'Te Karere', TV2's maori language programme, which has proved highly popular with its target audience since starting 15 months ago.



Producer, director, editor, reporter and presenter Derek Fox knows of maori language classes which tape every programme as a teaching aid. Maori meetings in Gisborne are timed to finish before 5.55 or start after 6pm.

But despite its success, Derek Fox is tired — tired of working and tired of fighting.

'It's bloody hard. Very tiring. You get sick of it. The long hours of work drain me.' At the time we interviewed him, he had had two weekends off in the previous 14.

He and three others, all based in Auckland, are expected to come up with a credible daily news programme covering all the maori news in the whole country. And they must make english versions of important items for the general news bulletins.

Such an undertaking calls for frequent delving into a deep bag of tricks. For example, when it's impossible to get one of Te Karere's reporters to a job, they give a local pakeha reporter, or even the cameraman, a list of questions to ask the interviewees in english, but to record the replies in maori.

When the tape gets back to Auckland, Te Karere staff then retape the questions in maori.

Having to work with technicians who do not understand maori provides headaches too. When Mr Fox is reading the news, he usually does so off a rolling 'autocue' mounted on the camera. But because the technicians can't read maori, they used to stop it rolling at the wrong times, forcing Mr Fox to drop his eyes to read from a duplicate script in his hands.

Most frustrating is seeing the computer programme control suddenly take the programme off the screen in mid-interview because it has run over time. This can happen because non-maori speaking technicians fail to understand the point in the newsreader's script when they can start rolling film of a news scene. So they wait until the reader has finished, perhaps five seconds longer than necessary. Three items later, the over-run is 15 seconds, which could be caught up in a half-hour programme. But on Te Karere's five minutes, it means a rude end to an interview.

But Derek Fox draws energy from doing a job he believes in.

'I am as good as, if not better qualified, than, any other person in this field in the country. That is not a big-headed thing, it's just a fact. On top of