

Tu Tangata Business Wananga rekindles 19th century flame

By Hazel Riseborough

In the past 18 months the Department of Maori Affairs promoted three Tu Tangata Business Wananga to train prospective Maori entrepreneurs. The courses were based on a syllabus developed by the Hawaii Entrepreneurship Training and Development Institute and were run by Dr George Kanahale of Hawaii and Dr Ngatata Love of Massey University.

Hailed as "one of the most significant things to happen in the business world in New Zealand in a long time" the course is seen by the pakeha as a training ground for a new type of Maori, the Maori of the '80s — one who wants to succeed in business and make a lot of money. But as Dr Love points out, although entrepreneurship is an individual characteristic, it is not incompatible with the Maori idea of sharing, for the individual must first be successful before he can help his people.

A BORN ENTREPRENEUR

A glance at economic activity in New Zealand last century will show that Maori entrepreneurship is not a new thing either. The Maori is a born entrepreneur. Captain James Cook's journals tell us that "at the Cavallies Islands several canoes came off to the ship and two or three of them sold us some fish" and at another village "we had no sooner come to anchor than between three and four hundred of the natives assembled in their canoes about the ship, some few were admitted on board and to one of the chiefs I gave a piece of broad cloth and distributed a few nails etc". Later he reported "All this forenoon had abundance of the natives about the ship and some few on board, we trafficked with them for a few trifles in which they dealt very fair and friendly".

In 1852 a Ngati Whanaunga chief told of his adventures when, as a small boy, he had gone aboard the Endeavour. His people were both afraid and interested. They liked the pakeha's food and his cloth. Indeed for a while cloth appealed to them more than iron, but they soon got the hang

of things and a nail, which could be sharpened into a chisel, or hoop iron which could be put to a dozen uses, became the preferred means of payment. The Maori were avid bargainers and traders and the Europeans soon had to pay with more than "a few trifles" for their food.

In the first decade of the 19th century most coastal tribes had regular contact with Europeans. They helped cut and load spars. They sailed as crew to Norfolk Island, New South Wales and even the United States of America and England. They bartered with the potatoes and pigs Cook had introduced to the country and received in return fish hooks, axes, spades and other iron tools — and eventually muskets. In the 1820s there was a huge increase in the area of cultivations at the Bay of Islands, evidently to produce food for trade; the Maori had entered the musket economy. In 1820 Hongi Hika, the greatest entrepreneur of his time, went to England as the guest of the missionary Thomas Kendall. On his return to Sydney in 1821 he exchanged all the presents he had received in London for 300 muskets. With these he terrorized his ancient enemies, while every tribe in New Zealand joined in the armaments race.

TE RAUPARAHA

The next great entrepreneur, Te Rauparaha, the Ngati Toa chief from Kawhia, went raiding with Ngapuhi to Taranaki and points south on the "If you can't beat them join them" principle. Kapiti took his eye as a likely headquarters for trading with the European and on his return to Kawhia he persuaded his whole tribe to forsake their ancestral lands where Tainui was drawn ashore after her long journey, and migrate southwards. His people took their few guns with them when they moved to Kapiti in 1821-22.

At first the main trade throughout the country was food for guns, but flax became increasingly important in the 1820s. In 1825 there was a resident trader at Mahia exchanging guns for flax and he was followed in 1828 by one at

William Stratt's painting, about 1856, shows Maoris taking their produce, brought by canoe, inland for trading. Print from the Alexander Turnbull Library.

