

not public servants but are advertised in the daily newspapers anyway. Upon writing to government officials I've been told of the government 'sinking lid' policy and the non replacement of staff; but why arouse false hopes for those unemployed with job offers that can't be taken up. I must admit that I still faithfully apply in writing to such advertisements despite my 'inside knowledge'. I suspect I'm keeping a staff clerk employed shuffling my applications around and he might show his gratitude some day.

Soul destroying

But on a serious note the number of employers who don't even bother replying to applicants is soul-destroying and the disease is contagious. I now notice some prospective employers state in their ad that they'll reply to every applicant — and that in one case was for labourers on a building site.

Of course the newspaper 'situations vacant' columns are increasingly full of sales jobs, nearly all promising great rewards, and of course with the majority paying on commission there's little risk to the employers. Such prospects for school leavers must be daunting, with qualifications now even needed for shop assistant jobs and 'experience preferred' for car cleaners, or valets as they are now called.

Limbo some more

I keep telling myself that I must be learning something from this limbo state I'm in and when I rejoin the 'real world' I'll really profit from the experience. Alas I don't think it'll work that way because every time I get a job, however temporary I know it is, I forget my moping-around time and live for the moment.

One thing I've learned about myself is that I'm more adaptable than I thought but not adaptable enough to win through. I've landed a job claimed as world first, the publication of a music festival newspaper that unfortunately didn't pay any wages because it went bust. Then there was the fund-raising job that also went bust by reversing the normal trend and overspending on funds. In between times was the census job that paid so poorly for the abuse received that only registered unemployed would do the work.

Congratulations

And for those adventurous souls who manage to actually register unemployed just to keep our politicians and bureaucrats honest, congratulations! I've fought my way through three labour department offices in Auckland in an effort to find work, not the dole. You see if you finally admit to yourself

that you need help finding a job, the battle's just begun, because by the time you've filled out the work experience form, you're on the defensive.

My encounters were usually ended at this point by the interviewing officer saying there was no work in my field or the preferred four options. I was then asked if I wanted to apply for the unemployed benefit and upon saying yes, was told to take a form to the Social Welfare Department located some distance away.

At this point in time I haven't received one cent in dole money despite applying for a benefit on two separate occasions. However I'm still alive and kicking and shortly start a two month temporary job which I've waited two months for. Of course that doesn't take into account the many employers who have said they'll put my application on file.

If just half of those come in I'm going to be a very busy lad explaining why I might find it impossible to be a tour bus driver during the day, handle customer complaints about faulty consumer goods, plan exhibitions for an art gallery, write articles for trade magazines and do a little social work on the side, and at night handle shift work in a factory whilst studying for a scholarship in the field of work dynamics.



Red tape cutter

Cutting through red tape is now the job of a man who not too long ago used to generate red tape for a living when he was Minister of Maori Affairs. Matiu Rata has put together a consultancy firm, Mana Management that works as a middleman between Maori people and bureaucracy.

Operating initially from an Auckland base, the firm now helps people from Paeroa to the far north, people who had

found they were on their own when it came to dealing with red tape.

In Paeroa, people whose land was

flooded last year were helped to seek recompense for crops, stock loss and loss of earnings. And in the far north Mana Management prepared a report for the trustees of a 700 acre block, a report on the best ways to use the land bearing in mind the need for rate relief (a large burden) and the Crown's call for upgrading the land.

For the block's approximately 108 Maori owners, the report contains amongst other ideas, the concept of a 'wilderness' area where people can recapture the pioneering spirit of New Zealand.

Mana Management also advises on land tenure and more specialised advice such as marketing.

Matiu Rata. "We encourage Maori partnerships and let people know where they can get the specialist information from. Tu Tangata business wananga have encouraged many Maori people to try business for themselves and that's good. What's needed is the link between the producer and the market.

"For example the Island community in Auckland need taro. We can grow an acceptable product with our climate. Young people in Auckland must learn to put it together administratively and use every available economic resource."



Matiu Rata with Phil Whaanga.