

State of the Nation meeting, Te Tii Marae
Waitangi, February 6th, 2008

**“We’re all in this together:
The Treaty, the economy and New Zealand’s future in the world”**
By Rod Oram

Greeting to this house and to those who have passed before.

My great thanks to the elders of Te Tii Marae for according me the significant privilege of speaking about the State of the Nation here this morning at Waitangi on Waitangi Day itself; and to Network Waitangi for the opportunity to do so yesterday evening in Whangarei.

And it is a great pleasure for me to speak on these two occasions about three inter-linked aspects of the State of the Nation: our Treaty, our economy and our future in the world.

To me, those issues are inextricably connected. Fulfilling the promises of one, helps us achieve the potential of the others. Conversely, failure in any one will cause us to fail in the others.

Only strong Treaty relations can maximise the potential of Maori, Pakeha and all New Zealanders...which in turn means we can build the strongest economy and the most beneficial engagement with the world.

We’re all in this together.

That’s why these three aspects of the Nation are so central to my work as a business journalist. In pursuit of my work, I range the length and breadth of our fascinating country (and sometimes abroad).

I do so to hear from people about their ambitions and their challenges, their failures and their successes. From them I learn what are New Zealand’s great opportunities in the world. It is one of the best jobs imaginable.

And thanks to that work, I have long been sure we have a unique opportunity in our history. We have the potential to become a role model for other nations, succeeding where they – and we – fail so often today on many economic, environmental and social issues.

We could become the first country to earn a First World, sustainable living from our natural environment; through myriad small, entrepreneurial and international companies; supporting and being supported by a just, multi-cultural society.

We would build the great attributes of our people and our land into a new New Zealand. It would look much like our nation today but bolder, stronger, more certain of its contribution to the world...and more successful.

We would remain, of course, very much ourselves. Who would ever want to be a pale imitation of some other nation? We are shaped by who we are as diverse peoples, what we are physically as a country and where we are half a world away from major centres of population.

Our difference is our gift to the world. We are enlivened by our distinctive cultures; in touch with our land and sea; inventive and creative; enterprising because of our remoteness; and small but able to efficiently run a full-service nation.

In a fast-homogenising global culture in which one product, one country looks ever more like another we are an attractive alternative, offering a different way to lead our lives, to nurture our world.

How can I be so sure our potential is so great? Because countless times in the 11 years to date my family and I have called New Zealand our home, I have seen ample evidence of those unique qualities of the people and country.

Let me give you just one example. I'm involved with a programme for mentoring future leaders of Auckland. These are impressive young men and women, typically in their thirties, who already hold demanding jobs in business, government, the arts, the not-for-profit sector and the professions.

To begin each two-year programme, Ngati Whatua hosts us for a weekend on the Orakei marae. In fact we start our third programme there this Saturday.

For the start of our very first programme in February 2004, the weather was truly spectacular. Northeasterly winds, the remnants of a cyclone up in the Pacific, howled across the Hauraki Gulf and battered Bastion Point. But we were safe and cosy that Saturday afternoon inside the whareniui.

The sense though of strength and resilience came much more from the people inside the meeting house than from its great timbers...particularly from the three people leading our discussion: Sir Hugh Kawharu, Pat Snedden and Rob Fenwick.

Sir Hugh spoke with great insight and wisdom of The Treaty, of the differences of meaning thrown up by the Maori and English versions, of its history down through the then 164 years since its signing, of Ngati Whatua's generous offer to Hobson that he could choose the land he deemed best for a capital city, of Ngati Whatua's Treaty claim and many other Treaty related subjects.

Pat spoke of what the Treaty meant to him as a founding document of the country, a compact between two peoples about their commitment to each other to build a nation together. He said he was rehearsing a talk he was giving the following day in an Auckland church. And that address, of course, became the basis for his powerful, passionate and eloquent book *Pakeha and the Treaty: why it's our Treaty too*.

And Rob Fenwick, one of the founders of the NZ Business Council for Sustainable Development, spoke of his work with the Ngati Whatua Trust Board on a variety of businesses such as the setting up of the radio station Mai FM and the development of land in the CBD.

What came through for me so strongly from these three fine men was the sense of their complementary strengths and skills and their shared passion for building their communities and this nation, hand in hand.

We're all in this together.

And we have to be because the challenges are enormous. Yes, the world wants more than ever what we produce in abundance from this bountiful land and sea and from the creative minds of our peoples.

And in some ways these trends are befitting Maori more than Pakeha. Some 60% of Maori assets are in key sectors such as agricultural, fisheries and tourism that depend on international trade and visitors, double the rate of Pakeha assets.

But at the very time the world is making it easier for us to do this though the likes of easy and cheap travel for people, or transport of goods, or instant and virtually free connection through the internet, there is a very real danger those trends could work against us.

New agricultural and forestry competitors are developing fast in places such as South America and Eastern Europe; very legitimate concerns over climate change could cause a backlash against -- or at least serious taxes on -- air travel; and in a world of ubiquitous communications, we few people - we New Zealanders are only 1 out of every 1,625 people on the planet - and what we have to say, could be lost in the babble of billions of voices.

Yet, we can choose to respond instead in highly beneficial ways that draw on the best of our cultures, working in partnership. Let me look at four examples of that.

First, if people respond to climate change by flying less but staying longer, we will need to redefine what it means to be hospitable.

Now, we have brief encounters with our visitors. They hop in a car, camper van, bus or plane and shuttle rapidly from one attraction to another. In a

single day an energetic tourist might go bungy jumping and sight seeing in the morning, wine tasting at lunchtime, shopping and swimming in the afternoon and to a cultural show and dinner in the evening. At the end of their couple of weeks here, they go home exhausted.

But if they came just once in their lives and so stayed for a month or six weeks, they'd want to slow down and deepen their engagement with us. They'd want to get to know us better. They would want to come into our communities, spend time with us, get involved a bit in our lives.

In that respect, the national tourism industry's long-term strategy explicitly embraces two hugely important Maori values, Manaakitangi and Kaitiakitanga. That's dead right. Hospitality, care and stewardship should be at the very heart of our welcome to overseas visitors. But it seems to me many of us have a long way to go in developing our understanding of how we can do that magnificently.

A second example of a sensible approach to global trends is sustainability. The value of stewardship is absolutely essential to our farms, forests and fisheries. We will prosper in those areas only if we can demonstrate the very highest standards of sustainability.

But we need to be very careful that whatever practices we apply to sustainability we make absolutely sure that they are rock-solid scientifically. Only then will they have credibility with our customers. To that end, it is heartening to see the rise in funding by the Foundation of Research Science and Technology for kaupapa Maori research contracts. They increased from 0.8% of the total (\$2.8m) in 1999 to 5% (\$20m) in 2004.

A third example is identity. Maori have led a cultural renaissance in New Zealand over the past 20 years. You help us define and distinguish our tiny nation in this huge world. Especially among young people, under the age of say 25. Many of them have a strong sense of their own cultural identity, yet greatly appreciate and often engage in the culture of other New Zealanders. Look for example of how many young Pakeha take huge pride and a sense of belonging from being members of kapa haka groups.

That respect for and involvement with other cultures, I believe, will enrich us all. So we will cherish and keep distinctive each culture rather than mix them up, water them down in some kind of bland kiwi cultural soup.

The fourth example is the changing nature of community itself. Electronic communications have really demolished distance. A video call to Europe on Skype is free and instant. Grandparents on a much belated OE can stay in touch with their mokopuna back here; colleagues can collaborate anywhere, anytime around the world; and lots of information, perhaps some knowledge and occasionally some wisdom can flow between peoples.

Communications have triggered a great driver of global change: communities and their rapidly changing nature and purpose. The attributes of communities have shifted radically in just a few years:

- From physical connection.....to virtual connection
- From well-honed conventions....to fast-evolving behaviour
- From shared values.....to shared interests
- From proximity.....to “remote intimacy”
- From a few people.....to many
- From self-help.....to collective help
- From local standards.....to global standards
- From local prospects.....to global prospects

The impact on New Zealand is profound. We are no longer just a far-off nation of 4.2m people. Today we extend our embrace beyond the traditional physical boundaries of a community. An iwi, for example, can reach out to its members and friends the world over, drawing on their support and help and in return sustaining them through a powerful sense of community.

And we can create and participate in virtual, worldwide communities. They might be groups of friends or family members; experts in a highly specialized scientific, academic or professional discipline; bridge players; field hockey goal keepers; collectors of memorabilia; customers; suppliers...in fact, any kind of collaborators in every conceivable human activity.

In those virtual communities, we should be ourselves rather than a pale imitation of some other country. We should offer to the world the best, the most distinctive, of New Zealand’s thinking, culture, products, services and spirit. Because, in our work we are creative, energetic, entrepreneurial and innovative; and in our international relationships we’re responsible and appreciated global citizens.

And in this inter-dependent world, where economic, political and environmental issues are drawing us ever closer, our opportunities and responsibilities have never been greater.

Which brings me to the Treaty itself. On that stormy Saturday afternoon four years ago on the Orakei marae, I took a huge leap in understanding the power and genius of the Treaty. I saw that then and now, it was about full equality, mutual respect, sharing of powers and sharing of society.

All those are very, very hard things for humans to do. And we have often failed abysmally in the 168 years since our forebears signed the Treaty here on this day.

But we keep trying. We have tried harder in recent decades. And we are the better for doing so. But we must try even harder still. Because if we learn to live well together by such values, we will indeed show the world a better way to live, better ways to deal with our incredibly complicated challenges of having so many people – 6.5 billion heading to 10 billion – depending for life on one fragile planet.

What, then, is the role of economics and business in all this? They are central in many ways. If we use our resources well to help meet the needs of others, we can better meet our own needs. It's about relationships, mutual benefit and the growing of something bigger than the sum of the parts. In contrast, self-sufficiency is an inward-looking, isolating, poorer approach to life.

That's true for all of us New Zealanders in a global context. We can earn a bigger, more sustainable living if we engage with the world economy. But it is just as true for many community within New Zealand.

But engaging with the world, or engaging with fellas down the road or over the hill, takes skill, confidence, openness and mutual understanding.

As a nation, we've a long way to go on our global engagement. Barely 30% of our economic activity comes from exports or investment overseas. Worse, that proportion has barely budged despite all the hard work and trauma of economic reforms.

In fact, the New Zealand Institute's research shows that we are relatively less engaged with the world economy than we were 15 years ago. That's because our share of world trade and investment has fallen.

We're slowly turning that around by pioneering new business models and skills that enable small, highly entrepreneurial companies to reach out to the world. In doing so, we are showing how small companies, small countries can benefit from this growing inter-dependence of the world.

And the issues are just as challenging for our largest business, Fonterra. Like any good iwi worrying about how their runanga works, how their assets are being deployed, how they can keep control of their destiny for the sake of future generations, the farmer-shareholders in the co-op are intensely examining and debating proposals for a new structure that would open up their business to outside capital and influence.

They are considering this monumental change because they want to maximise their opportunities in the world.

The same themes are at work across Maoridom too, of course, as you respond to new opportunities. Take, for example, Tuaropaki which is the result of a 1952 amalgamation of lands owned by members of the seven Mokai hapu with tribal affiliation to Ngati Tuwharetoa and Ngati Raukawa.

In 1979 administration of the land was vested in owner trustees to administer the Tuaropaki lands to best advantage of the beneficial owners. The trust's mission is to:

- Be at one with our customary land and taonga.
- Provide sustainable wealth and benefits to the owners and their whanau.
- Support community initiatives.
- Meet the challenges of the global and local markets by exceeding stakeholder and customer expectation.

And in pursuit of that, it has diversified from running stock on their land north of Taupo to building a geothermal plant (reaching out to Israel and other places around the world for the technology) and a large glass house complex for horticulture, again establishing international relationships. I greatly enjoyed a visit to those impressive developments a few years ago.

And indeed there are plenty of other examples of Maori building on their asset base in fields such as tourism, telecommunications, retirement villages and private hospitals, wine companies and renewable energy

For you and any other people in New Zealand such bold initiatives depend on some bed-rock values of big but realistic ambition, strong relationships with diverse parties, transparency and excellent corporate governance.

On those issues, Maori and Pakeha alike have more in common – in both success and failures – than they might sometimes acknowledge. We have useful insight and experience to share from our differing perspectives. But we aren't exploring those anyway deeply enough.

To help us make that journey of discovery together, I'd like to propose three values to help us: Understanding, commonality and leadership.

Understanding: In January of last year, my very English youngest sister, Emma, married Adnan, a very Pakistani young man. Their wedding, in a very English village, brought together two families, two cultures, two religions. The bride, a convert to Islam, only met her parents-in-law-to-be for the first time the night before the wedding. So there were plenty of fears, uncertainties, tensions, high hopes and other emotions to bridge.

As the oldest male of the Oram whanau, it was my duty at the wedding itself to welcome the families and friends who had come from many corners of the world. I did so in three languages: English, Urdu and Maori.

And this is what I said about us Kiwis:

New Zealand society is a fascinating, uplifting place...one that offers some hope, some encouragement in these global challenges of reconciliation and mutual progress. We were the only country where a colonial power signed a treaty of respect and recognition with indigenous people in their own land. So February 6th, 1840, the day Maori chiefs and Governor Hobson, on behalf of Queen Victoria, signed the Treaty of Waitangi, was a very important day for us.

That's not to say the last 167 years have been a piece of cake. It is only in recent decades that a Maori renaissance has helped us appreciate how much we almost lost in terms of culture, knowledge and society.

It is a constant delight to see how much of Maori culture we Europeans have assimilated in New Zealand. Great learnings passed down through the likes of powerful proverbs.

Knowing I would be speaking tonight, I asked my old and wise friend back home in New Zealand, Henare Te Ua, if he could suggest a Maori proverb that encapsulated these theme of families, cultures...the sharing of knowledge....of coming together for a great purpose. This is what he offered:

**Ma te matauranga me te ora o tooku rourou,
me te matauranga me te ora o tou rourou,
ka ora nga iwi.**

*By sharing my basket of wellbeing, cultural knowledge and learning
With your basket of well-being, cultural knowledge and learning
We will gain understanding of each other*

Commonality: We need commonality of purpose across all cultures and communities. This does not mean some grand, national strategy. Rather that we acknowledge each other's aspirations, yet find common ground on which we can build together a new New Zealand. This doesn't come easy to some people. They see others' gains as their loss.

Moreover, our cultures serve us poorly when we try to resolve conflict within and between communities. Business and politics are particularly prone to letting unresolved tensions build within organisations until they wreak havoc on the people and institutions.

Shortly, my wife Lynn, our daughter Celeste, and her friends Arena and Steph, will honour you with a waiata

Te Piriti - the Bridge

My concern - truly, truly -

**is for the pillars of the bridge.
pounded, beaten, a hundred times
by the strong tides there
rising and falling, oh.**

**The tears in my eyes
are like the waves,
welling up, and spilling over here,
while outside, (the waves are also) breaking.**

Leadership: We need a new kind of leadership. Historically, New Zealanders have tended to respond best to dominant individuals. But two dangers arise: of us being led astray; and of our lack of commitment to their grand plans.

Better would be leadership that springs naturally from within each iwi, group, business, industry, family, whanau, community, hapu or culture. These people, passionate about New Zealand and what it can achieve – what it has to achieve – would inspire and encourage the people around them, helping them find ways to maximise their own, and thus the nation’s potential.

When we weave those dreams into a rich tapestry boldly defining New Zealand and then make those dreams real, we will offer ourselves and the world a better way to live.

We’re all in this together.

So today, Waitangi Day, is absolutely the right day for us to consider our collective ambition for this great country of ours.

We’ve been at it a while. Allen Curnow, in his poem *Landfall in Unknown Seas*, celebrated the heroic aspirations of my Pakeha forbears on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of Tasman’s sighting of Aotearoa.

***Simply by sailing in a new direction
You could enlarge the world.***

But, of course, you fellas were way ahead of us. Your ancestors had been even more heroic in crossing the Pacific hundreds of years before, enlarging their world.

We share that heroism and adventure. But we also share the same challenge. In the real, physical sense there are no more unknown lands and seas for us to discover.

So, as Curnow wrote, the challenge to us today is even greater:

Who reaches

***A future down for us from the high shelf
Of spiritual daring?***

Indeed, who amongst us will?

Who amongst us will take as their guide the true spirit of te Tiriti -- te Piriti, the bridge of our nation, standing strong on its precious pillars against the global storms of change?

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