

# Taratahi's 90 years of knowledge

## Centre vital to future of farms

I am writing this column in South Auckland having just spent three hours chairing a meeting and listening to Pacific people giving their views to Pacific Select Committee as part of its review of the New Zealand Pacific Islands relationship. The occasion provided me with a timely reminder of the diverse community we live in and how different the issues are in this community compared to those which concern those living in the Wairarapa and Central Hawkes Bay.

Many spoke negatively about the growing Chinese influence in the Pacific, a topic which has never been raised with me in the Wairarapa. Some Pacific people thought we should reduce aid to Pacific Countries and spend it providing better education and health services to Pacific people living in New Zealand. I was surprised to learn that there were thousands, yes thousands, of young Pacific people not receiving any education because they are living in New Zealand illegally. Their parents are too scared to send their children to school for fear of being caught and deported. We were told the state should allow these children into our schools and hospitals because the children had not caused a

The Green position defies common sense in the context of the prosperity the free trade agreement will bring to our community.

On Saturday, Heien and I were privileged to join 140 others celebrating Taratahi's 90th birthday and the wisdom and vision of founder Sir William Perry. Much has changed since 1919. First the numbers. Taratahi began with public donations of \$56,000 and a grant of \$18,000 from Government. Those numbers put into context the cost of buying Mangarata farm earlier this year for more than \$4m. Today it has an annual turnover of \$25m. Just as this centre started 90 years ago as a farm that gave new skills to soldiers returning from the World War 1, it remains vital today

preparing 750 young men and women for a career in this country's most important industry. Many of Taratahi's graduates play a significant role in this country's economy because of the skills learned beginning with commonsense and a logical approach to problem solving. It's sad that many young people in Auckland and Wellington know nothing of farming life; they have never witnessed the awesome beauty of the sunrise over a backcountry dam on the first

Saturday in May; or the simple satisfaction of lambing a ewe. Taratahi and the programmes it offers are vital because they attract young people back to agriculture. No sector in our economy has generated greater productivity gains than the agricultural sector and we need new generations of young people with energy ideas and vision, to make us best in the world at transforming carbohydrate into protein. New Zealand has been affected by the current economic situation. We have seen economic contraction, with unemployment rising from a 22-year low of 3.5 per cent in late 2007 to its current

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level of 5 per cent, with forecasts near 7 per cent in 2010.

In responding to the crisis, the New Zealand Government has recognised the role it must play in keeping the economy going and focused on two key priorities.

First, cushioning the hardest-hit New Zealanders from the effects of the recession, both through helping business protect jobs and by giving New Zealanders who lose their jobs the best possible chance of finding

new ones. New Zealand's fiscal stimulus package is about 5 per cent of our gross domestic product – amongst the largest in the world.

Secondly, we are setting out a credible road to economic recovery so we can emerge stronger from the recession than we went into it. This includes longer-term measures to lift New Zealand's productivity, improve competitiveness and boost growth. In this, we've taken an inclusive, tripartite approach, recognising that the problems arising from the current situation affect all Kiwis.

Although New Zealand has been affected far less severely by the crisis than some other parts of the world, we still face uncertain times. New Zealand is a small trading nation and, like others, we are being buffeted by the global economic storm. Dealing with the crisis will mean ongoing budget deficits and an expected doubling of Government debt over the next three years. We expect the New Zealand economy to lose about 50 billion New Zealand dollars of output through to 2012, compared with what would have happened without the recession.

Finally a plug for the Parliamentary rugby team fundraiser at Whareama this Sunday. Kick off is at 1.30pm followed by a charity auction at 3.30pm. Email your thoughts to johnhayes.mp@parliament.govt.nz or visit johnhayes.co.nz



FROM  
THE  
HOUSE

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problem, their parents had. Clearly many in the audience thought the best way forward was an amnesty. No-one suggested that the way forward was for the illegal overstayers to return home. What is clear to me is that the \$2 billion hole in the ACC accounts is not the only problem we have inherited; there is also a significant overstayer issue which will be costly to deal with regardless of the way forward.

Last week in Parliament, the second reading of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement began. This agreement connects New Zealand exporters to a market of 566 million people. In a minority report, the Green Party announced that it would oppose the Bill because the agreement could not be used to ban tobacco.