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"MAKING THE PRESENT CENTURY TEEM WITH WONDER"

Kia ora tatou. Good evening.

This forum is about leadership. Leadership for the present and leadership for the future.

I want to speak about the qualities required of all of us - especially our young leaders - if we are to make this new century "teem with wonder" for New Zealand and its remarkable people.

A key quality of any leader is the ability to embrace, drive and inspire positive change. We are here to share ideas and insights about how we can bring about change in our country so that it can fulfil its destiny to be a place envied and admired by other nations for its economic prosperity, its social harmony, its breakthrough achievements and its humanity and compassion.

Those who advocate and agitate for, and lead, change will always have their critics. The poet and prophet, James K Baxter, wrote a poem about what happens when people fear and resist change. Part of the poem goes like this:

*Let us admit, with no shame
whatever,
We are not that kind of people;
We have learnt to weigh each
word like an ounce of butter;
Our talent is for anger and
monotony -*

*Therefore we will survive the
singers,
The fighters, the so-called
lovers - we will bury them
Regretfully, and spend a whole
wet Sunday
Arguing whether the corpses were
dressed in black or red.*

Like it or not, our world is changing. And early in this decade and century, people like Richard Florida have made a clear, compelling and statistically robust case that a revolutionary change is happening in countries, communities, cities, organisations and economies around the world. This is, he says, the creative age, the imagination age - Rolf Jensen calls it the Dream Society - in which creativity and creative people are the driving force behind economic growth.

This has started, as some of you will know, in our own country. Already the creative industries are playing a key role economically. In the year to March 2001, they contributed \$6.95 billion to our economy and made up 3.1% of GDP. What's exciting is that our creative industries are still very much in a build-up phase.

What's marvellous and exciting about this change that is sweeping across the world is that it is centred on **CREATIVITY** - that fragile, mystical, magical, mysterious, inexhaustible thing that springs from the awesomely powerful collision of human talent, human imagination and human intelligence.

What's even more marvellous and exciting is that those of us who make their living from creativity are now the new currency of value, eagerly sought - as Richard Florida points out - by cities and organisations in the U.S. and around our planet because of their ability to produce hard-nosed and tangible benefits - competitive advantage and differentiation, community revivification and economic prosperity.

And the most marvellous and exciting thing in all of this is that CREATIVITY - that shape-shifting, intangible thing once scorned as the territory of mere dreamers, dissolutes and fringe dwellers - is making us radically re-think how we successfully build businesses, economies, communities and countries.

The New Zealand poet, Kate Camp, may have been describing this sea-change in her lovely poem Broken Glass to Evening Dress:

*Think of the hazard this broken glass was
To the community! It will now cease*

*To be ugly and dangerous but will
Have a sheen rivalling that of silk.*

The present century teems with wonder.

One challenge for all leaders in this present century as we lead in this era of imagination is to change to a new style of leadership, a way of leading that nurtures, encourages, challenges, inspires and strengthens that delicate yet dynamically powerful product of the human spirit: CREATIVITY.

So, how are we to make this present century teem with wonder for us in these amazing islands?

We must, as all leaders must, develop a vision. I call for a new vision. And it is a new vision of ourselves.

The poet Allen Curnow, had a vision some sixty years ago in his great poem, The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch. He stated:

*Not I, some child, born in a marvellous
year,
Will learn the trick of standing upright
here.*

How do we stand upright and, what's more, leap and bound and sprint forward into this new age of opportunity? A young poet of our times, Glenn Colquhoun, has answered, I believe, Allen Curnow's defiant prediction or desperate prayer. In his poem "The trick of standing upright here" he states:

*The art of walking upright here
is the art of using both feet

One is for holding on.*

One is for letting go.

In this creative age, we must still use the holding on foot - the foot of efficiency, process, accountability and hard-headed strategy. But we must also use our other foot - the foot of creativity, imagination, insight and risk - if we are to stand truly upright and walk and run as a country.

So, it is important that we do these things:

1. Institute creativity as a core-competency of the nation. And aggressively build our national spirit around the qualities of intelligence, imagination, bravery, openness, tolerance of failure, embracing of risk, curiosity and exploration. We must do this across our entire education system and throughout all our public and commercial institutions.
2. Develop a new self-identity, a new way of seeing ourselves - as we really are and have always been: one of the most innovative, creative and entrepreneurial and achieving countries on the planet.

To see ourselves anew, we have to cast aside forever the Gallipoli myth.

There are many who say that this country found its identity on the rugged and bloody slopes, ridges and gulleys of Gallipoli.

In 1915, they claim, we found ourselves to be a resilient, tough and practical people; able to

endure hardship; and disciplined by doggedness and determination. We have come to speak proudly of the ANZAC spirit - tenacity, comradeship and grim endurance. Our sense of self was defined by the sons of pioneers who faced Johnny Turk at Quinn's Post, the Nek, Plugge's Plateau and took and held the trenches and rifle pits of Chunuk Bair. Sadly, we have been sold a myth. And the challenge facing New Zealand, if we are to fulfil the vision of being a creative and innovative country, is to shake off the shackles of the ANZAC myth - to transform our consciousness and accept and realise who we really are as a people. If we do not make this transformation of consciousness and culture, we are destined and doomed, despite all our grand words, dreams and visions to be a nation of around three to four million people limited by our own timidity and a commodity mentality. A nation, bitter, fearful of risk, envious and suspicious, pious in our mediocrity, which spends its time - in the words of the poet Lauris Edmond - cultivating "mind's middle distances."

I believe that the spirit of ANZAC, admirable though it is, is not our true identity. Indeed, it has never been it. It is not it now. And, it is certainly not our future. I think our true national sense was defined ten years before the feet of our young men touched the shingle and sand of that tragic Turkish cove.

In his novel, The Book of Fame, Lloyd Jones tells the story of how young New Zealanders discovered their own - and this country's - unique sense of

self. The story is a wonderful book and Lloyd Jones a worthy winner of last year's Montana Award for Fiction. It's the uplifting and inspirational tale about the 1905 All Blacks who toured the United Kingdom and dazzled the home of Rugby Union by the skill and flair of their play.

Early on in the book, there's a wonderful passage which describes the dawning realisation among this rag-tag group of young men - miners, farmers, farriers, foundry men, bootmakers, blacksmiths, bankers and boatbuilders, from a raw, rugged and new country - that their style of play is remarkable, brilliant, creative, different and outstandingly successful. Here's how it goes:

We began to float and to achieve a kind of grace that had become second nature, like language or riding a bike.

One night Frank Glasgow sat down at the piano and composed music to describe the English style of play; it went - plonk plonk plonk plonk, plonk . . .

*To describe our play Frank came up with this number -
Dum de dah dum de dah bang whoosh bang! Whoosh dum
De dah clicketty-click bang! Whoosh da . . .*

It was music new to English ears

The book is a wonderful, poetic story of adventure, creativity, bravery and transformation. This country - small in size but in big in terms of innovation and daring - stunned the world. And the game of rugby and the established order of things were never the same again.

I believe it is - and has always been - the destiny and the calling of our amazing country to lead the world, to adventure, to be creative and innovative, to compose music not just new to English ears but to the ears of all the world.

We are and always have been a nation of creative achievers - atom splitters, DNA unravellers, whale riders, Lord of the Ring's makers, bungee leapers and bastard knocker-offers. Our creative heroes and heroines are legendary and they are legion. This is the glory of our past, the reality of our present and our hope for the future.

I believe that our country has - and has always had - a calling to be a brave nation, a nation of pioneers. And our special call today, at the beginning of a new century, is to re-find and hold to the spirit of those original risk-takers, those pioneers - brown and white - who voyaged across the seas to settle here and build something better. Our call today is to be the new pioneers of the twenty-first century world who, inspired by the voyagers of old, seek not solid land but to find and explore and develop and nurture the intangible,

magical and inexhaustible territories of the human intellect and the creative spirit.

There is another quality that leaders must have: bravery. Richard Florida sets out for us a vision which we must have the courage and the daring to embrace. He asks us to live with tolerance; to accept diversity; and to be open to the creative spirit. This requires strength of character. And it requires sound nerves and raw courage.

Allen Curnow wrote a poem sixty years ago called "Landfall in Unknown Seas". In it, he asks for bravery from us as we confront the future:

*But now there are no more islands to be
found
And the eye scans risky horizons of its
own
In unsettled weather
Who navigates us towards what unknown
But not improbable provinces? Who
reaches
A future down from the high shelf
Of spiritual daring?*

We are privileged to be living at a time full of incredible opportunity. We need to act now with bravery to reach down from the high shelf of spiritual daring the future that is waiting for us.

And if we do feel fear at making this daring leap, let the words spoken to a young Native American at the time of his initiation give us reassurance:

*As you go the way of life,
You will see a great chasm.*

Jump.

It is not as wide as you think.

Thank you.