hard battle to win more time, more staff and more facilities.

To make the programme any longer than its present five minutes would mean shortening the 5.30 news, but he doesn't think anyone would shed any tears over that.

But Derek Fox's vision of the future is much bigger and brighter than 15 minutes of maori news. He has a vision of an Aotearoa broadcasting corporation, financed by 12 per cent of the state broadcasting budget — because maori people make up 12 per cent of the population, 12 per cent of the licence fee payers, and 12 per cent of the advertisers' target audience. He takes his figures from the last census.

'If you look at Television New Zealand's budget in those terms, we are owed about $20 million, and you can do a hell of a lot of recruiting and training with $20 million.'

'Even if we had to pay for time and facilities (out of that $20 million), we would still get a hell of a lot more than we are getting now.'

Despite the contribution of maori people to broadcasting, Derek Fox points out that in return less than 0.2 per cent of the material on television is maori material.

'Television New Zealand has displayed that it is not angled or geared to recruit or train maori journalists.

'They could only find one maori-speaking journalist in the whole of Television New Zealand to do Te Karere.' He admits that's probably more than 99 per cent of the newspapers in the country have, but points out that TVNZ is a publicly owned enterprise, and therefore has a duty to meet the needs of all sections of the public. Newspapers are privately owned and are entitled to please themselves, he says.

He finds his position as television's resident maori expert tough going. 'It's all a bit much for a country boy from Ruatoria to be counsel, judge and jury of everything maori in Television New Zealand.

Mr Fox says Te Karere has done a number of things for the maori people. It has made them aware of events affecting them which they might not otherwise have heard about without travelling long distances to be there. And it has made them aware of news and current affairs in a way they weren't before, and that in turn has made them critical of existing news service. They are demanding a better deal from all news media as a result, Mr Fox claims.

'It's a tremendous psychological boost to those learning maori,' he claims. During its first few weeks, maori language classes wrote in asking the reporters to speak more slowly. They did not ask for sub-titles, Mr Fox points out. Te Karere has been criticised by some pakeha for not using english sub-titles.

Mr Fox is opposed to them. The easy answer to such critics, he says, is that inserting sub-titles is a major technical exercise that he does not have the time, people or equipment to do. He disputes claims that sub-titles would be an aid to learning the language.

'It's a lazy man's approach. You will never learn a language through sub-titles,' he says.

And he claims that if sub-titles were used, they might change too fast for people to read, so there would then be demands for a voice translation, and the whole purpose of Te Karere would be eroded out of existence.

Besides, he argues, it's not really very inconvenient to have to 'endure' 25 minutes a week of maori language. He compares it with Wales, where the 20 per cent of the population who speak Welsh get 22 hours a week of Welsh-language television.

Te Karere has come about at a time when the news media are 'discovering' maori news and employing reporters who specialise in maori topics. At the same time, maori people are generating news in a way and on a scale they never have before.

April's education hui at Huntly's Waahi marae was a case in point, he says. The radical resolutions emerging from that would not have happened five years ago, but they were coming from conservative people who were fed up with being fobbed off by the system.

Te Karere has proved itself an embarrassingly able competitor in the race to get the news first. It was the first, by two days, to break the Motunui effluent outfall story which became a major talking point all around the country. It became front-page lead material, whereas Derek Fox believes in the past it would have gone unnoticed for months.

It was also the first to alert the world to the fact that one of maoridom's most conservative organisations, the Maori Council of Churches, had declared the Treaty of Waitangi a fraud. The significance was not lost on the likes of Derek Fox. No longer could the pakeha in power dismiss maori protesters as a radical fringe minority — now ordinary, middle-of-the-road maori citizens were beginning to grumble.

He is critical of the way a lot of maori news is handled by the media in general, and the way reporters who try to cover maori news sensitively are branded as 'biased towards maoris'.

He says the came very close to lodging a formal complaint against his own employers for some aspects of their reporting of the hikoi to Waitangi early this year.

While giving Maori International three out of 10 for public relations, Mr Fox is angry about the way its affairs have been reported. He says it's all been shallow, one-sided, 'spot' reporting which has created an image in the public mind of 'a bunch of ratbags trying to take over the Maori Arts and Crafts Institute'.

'That's not true,' he says. The company's side of the story has never been properly presented in the media, he believes, (although conceding the company itself is partly to blame), and its true significance has been missed.

That significance, he says, is that Maori International is going to manage huge areas of land and forests in maori ownership, and a lot of pakeha people who have done well out of the maori dollar are going to be hurt.

He claims that in Gisborne alone — administrative centre for thousands of hectares of maori land — pakeha accounting firms stand to lose $1 million a year in fees to Maori International.

He was furious with Brian Edwards' Fair Go programme for the way it conducted a 'poll' of viewers' most hated programmes. Te Karere came second.

When Mr Fox inquired into how the poll results were obtained, he says he was appalled by the programme's sloppy methods and lack of care to gain fair and accurate results. He complained to Dr Edwards, who dismissed the whole exercise as a bit of harmless fun. But Mr Fox said he did not think his maori viewers would find it very funny, and he pointed out that such a 'poll' could easily tighten the television purse-strings when Te Karere asked for more money and facilities.

He feels that as time goes by, maori affairs reporters are more and more going to need to be bilingual as the maori language is increasingly dusted off and used at news-making events. Translations are second-hand news and make for second-rate reporting, he believes.

He spoke at length to a recent training course for maori affairs reporters on the need to distinguish between bias and perspective. Te Karere, he says, provides a maori perspective on the news, and there is no reason why other media cannot do the same.

On long car journeys he and fellow broadcasters Purewa Biddle and Whai Ngata used to hold "kupu sessions" when they discussed regional variations in the language. As well as being fun — 'I would have words they had never heard before' — it helped him work out which maori words were most widely understood and therefore most appropriate to the people whose affairs are being reported — Ngapuhi words for a story about Ngapuhi people, for example.

Mr Fox doesn't know how much longer he will stick it out. The constant struggling for what he sees as the maori people's entitlement, on top of his long hours of work, have clearly taken the shine off the job for him.

But if he does opt for something less draining at some stage, he can be assured of considerable mana for his part in carrying the message of maoritanga.