



The debate highlighted the dilemma that many artists are confronted with: what to sell and what not to sell when an artist is trying to survive off his/her work. Out of this discussion there also came the idea that perhaps some sort of gallery or museum should be created in New Zealand to ensure that the artists' work would have a permanent home and would not be lost from the Maori people.

By accepting that the artists do have to make a living, the Society agreed to create a special position to be filled by Georgina Kirby (a member of the Maori and South Pacific Arts Council). She will work as a special liaison officer between artists and art dealers.

Another stimulating discussion followed comments made by the Rt. Rev. Manu Bennett, Bishop of Aotearoa, who dealt with many of the problems that Maori youth are faced with. One of the major problems that was given a full airing was that of drugs. It was at this point that Bruce Stewart, writer and president of the Society, gave a personal and earthy talk about drugs, Maori youth, and what happens when a person lands in prison. Bruce's talk was real and right at the core of the problem. He pointed out that Maori youth who live off their wits in the streets cannot, in most cases, be reached by what they consider to be the "old ways".

Bruce pointed out that he had for many years survived on the streets and he presented a deeply moving picture of the daily struggle of living on the edge of a society that at times seemed to have been just as dangerous as the streets. With this kind of hard-earned knowledge behind him, Bruce Stewart stressed that "plastic Maoridom" will not reach Maori youth.

Patricia Grace (novelist, poet and short-story writer), and Haare Williams (poet, educator and broadcaster), conducted one of the many workshops at the conference. The writers' workshop that they conducted was set up for both veteran and new writers and it dealt with the whole sphere of writing and communication. Some of the new writers spoke about the difficulty of finding places to have their work published.* During the workshop time was set aside for the writers to write a piece that could generate positive criticism and an exchange of information.

Katarina Mataira conducted a workshop on languages and she introduced a new method of teaching languages. The people involved with her workshop were most impressed and in a matter of hours she had them writing and speaking basic sentences in Fijian.

Left Among those who attended the conference were (from left) Tainui Stephens, Poto Murray, Hugh Sayer, Miria Simpson and Toi Maihi.

Right Digger Te Kanawa was there too. Her superb weaving of mats and cloaks have won her international fame.

Among the many poets who gave readings at the conference was Apirana Taylor. Apirana is a young poet who had his first book of poems published by Voice Press. From his book *Eyes of the Ruru* he read a number of very powerful poems.

Ted Nia was there with an array of electrical equipment recording just about every word that was spoken at the conference. Ted's interest lies in the visual and oral tradition of his people. And from the constant movement of Ted and his microphone over the three days of the conference, he must have recorded a wealth of information.

Heta Te Hemara, a political activist and union leader, gave a number of talks stressing the role Maori people could be taking in political activity. Heta strongly believes that artists and writers have a heavy responsibility to their people. He believes that their political consciousness should be reflected in their work.

One of the many high points of the conference came when the Maranga Mai players put on a production of their play, which had been strongly attacked after it had been performed at Mangere College.

Despite the criticism levelled against this production since the Maranga Mai players performed it at the college, I was impressed with their handling of issues crucial to their people: the land struggle, police aggression, and the lack of justice in a system that is not blind to colour. It is my belief that this production represents just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what writers and artists will be expressing in their work in the coming days. It's gonna get hotter in the kitchen!

It is without question that the Maori Artists and Writers Conference of 1980 was huge success. One cannot help but wonder how the mass media could afford not to cover a conference of such magnitude in some depth. But then, that was part of what the Maranga Mai players had drawn attention to in their production.

*There's always *Te Kaea*.