

to explain it but most appeared unsure of what exactly they were talking about. An aside from one carver claimed that there were thirty-two such "mauri". I was amazed by such an array.

After an hour or so Archdeacon Ihaka interjected and wanted to know what the topic was! It was unfortunate that he thought the talk was a lot of bull because it raises the question of MASPAC's role in these hui. Admittedly, the council paid for it but to me once the cheque is handed over the council should assume an observer's role and not be directly involved in the proceedings. It smacked a bit of off-handedness and suggested that administrators know what is best for artists.

I felt that such a searching subject underlined the predicament of the maori carver today. While most carvers are engaged in the socio-cultural aspects of carving, i.e., as a vehicle for transmitting the wider values of maori society, a number were looking at carving as their principal means of income. They were in a sense at the crossroads. While they recognised the need to preserve the spiritual or "tapu" aspects of their art they also needed to come to terms with things that were "noa". With the depletion of native timber like totara they had to look to exotic woods or fabricated materials. Also, their time was divided between tribal projects and commercial projects.

It appeared to me that as maori carvers they wanted to reaffirm their role and their obligation. This dilemma has been faced by other indigenous peoples whose art or craft is straddled between two worlds. The maori may be able to learn from the eskimo in this respect. For instance, the eskimo selects stones to carve for ritual purposes which are very different to stones for sale to tourists. This principle is adopted by some maori weavers — who relate to the flax when working with maori people quite differently to when demonstrating to a group of tourists. The carver, likewise, needs to come to understand these two worlds that he moves in.

The hui raised a number of issues — such as the need for a register or guild of maori carvers, the need for a trademark for "quality" produced goods, the need to adapt to new technology and new materials — which were discussed but left unresolved. Other issues, like allowing women to train as carvers, were either overlooked or ignored. But the hui at last provided the carvers with a forum to improve communication and co-ordination among maori craftsmen. This should be encouraged and, perhaps, a combined hui of maori weavers and carvers to discuss the common area of marketing. Are you there Maori International?



Left to right: Roger Neich, Cliff Whiting.

