

What Te Ao Hou printed 30 years ago Ruia Morrison's World Tour

by Elsdon Craig

A VISIT to America and a return trip to England and the Continent are almost assured for Miss Ruia Morrison, the New Zealand lawn tennis champion, next year.

No sooner was she back in her own country after her first appearance at Wimbledon, than the Auckland Maori committee which raised funds to send her abroad with the New Zealand Davis Cup team was busy checking the accounts to see if it would be possible for her to make another venture next year.

Mr J. Waititi, chairman of the committee, says the expenses from the recent tour have to be computed but he is almost certain there is enough in the fund to send Miss Morrison on the same tour as well as to America. Much depends on the extent of her itinerary in Europe. If this is larger than anticipated some more money may be needed.

Meanwhile the champion is back at Training College studying as hard as ever to become a teacher and quite unaffected by her triumphs on the international courts. Her modesty on and off the courts impressed all who saw her play, including

the members of the organising committees at the tournaments.

When asked at Whenuapai airport what she thought of Wimbledon, her reply was what those who knew her before she left New Zealand expected from Ruia Morrison.

"I was pretty lucky at Wimbledon," she said. "I had the luck of the draw."

Miss Morrison makes no secret of the fact she would like to return to the scenes of her greatest moments. She acknowledges that her tennis has improved. She says she is hitting the ball harder than she did before, indicating that she has benefited from her experience of playing against the world's best.

At least America's best want to see her in action in their country. Since she returned to New Zealand, Miss Morrison has had at least three letters from Miss Darlene Hard, the American runner-up to the Negress Althea Gibson at Wimbledon, pressing her to come to America. Numerous other requests have been received from tennis officials and supporters abroad stressing that Miss Morrison is not

only a great advertisement for the game but also a great advertisement for New Zealand.

Although a further venture abroad will have to be officially sanctioned, the proposal that Miss Morrison should visit America has been sympathetically received by the New Zealand Lawn Tennis Association. Mr Waititi has an assurance that everything possible will be done to ensure the visit takes place.

Almost the first call which Miss Morrison made after her return was at her old school, Queen Victoria. A few days later she was given an official welcome at the Maori Community Centre. The arrangements for this were made only three days before, but the centre has rarely been as packed. Although high-ranking tennis officials joined in the reception it is doubtful if it eclipsed the spontaneous greeting which awaited her at Whenuapai airport.

Miss Morrison was surprised and delighted when she stepped off the aircraft to find a reception committee of her own people - Training College students - waiting for her. She was greeted with the traditional challenge of the Maori followed by the haka and responded by rewarding the members of the welcoming party with a kiss. Dozens of Europeans stood by watching the enthusiastic scene amazed at the mysterious manner in which the party suddenly appeared on the tarmac and then disappeared to greet the returning heroine again with songs and more hakas.

