

TE ROOPU WAHINE MAORI TOKO I TE ORA

The Maori Women's Welfare League Annual Conference

Na Harata Solomon

Members of the Maori Women's Welfare League from all over New Zealand packed the town of Whakatane for their 29th annual conference between 11 and 14 May this year.

The four-day conference, the largest ever held in the eastern Bay of Plenty, got off to a rallying good start with a traditional Maori welcome on a grand scale. Historic Wairaka Marae was the venue for the powhiri, and provided a superb setting for the rituals and ceremonial procedure which indicated to all present that the conference was now under way and would run its decreed course. Approximately 300 delegates and as many observers, plus hundreds of visitors from near and far, combined together, and moved on to the marae as one unified ope to the karanga powhiri of the kuia of the host tribes of Mataatua.

I for one allowed my spirit to feast upon the beauty and insight that flowed from the whaikorero and waiata. These treasures were handed down from the generations that have preceded ours. Even in this nuclear age, they have the potency and magnetism to inspire yet another generation. The impact of the proceedings was greatly increased by the crystal-clear sunlit morning. This charged atmosphere

At the gate of Wairaka Marae. At far left is the Minister of Maori Affairs, the Hon. Ben Couch. Fourth from left is Te Arikinui Dame Te Atai Rangikaahu, the League's Patroness. — Whakatane Beacon Photo.

