

Maori Publications need funds

It is three years now since a press in Whakatane was first set up to print children's books in Maori, and in that time the need for these books has grown enormously. Yet in spite of the growing demand for books in Maori, the future of Whakatane's Maori Publication's Committee looks doubtful.

Don Turnbull of Ruatoki, and John Hunia of Te Teko, set up the press to support the teaching and learning of Maori, helped by a grant from the IYC Telethon Trust.

The two men effectively combine their different skills. John is a fluent Maori speaker, with Maori as his first language. He is an adviser in Maori language and culture to schools in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, and uses his wide ranging knowledge and contacts to collect stories for the books. His aim, if the venture continues, is for people all over the country to contribute stories in Maori based on their own environments. "This would help children relate to their own areas, and also build up a collection for all children reflecting the many different tribal tradi-

tions," he says.

Don Turnbull is an adviser in language for the area, and has acquired many new skills over the past three years that he has been running the press. In the beginning he found he ended up with more ink on himself than on the pages, but now he doesn't even bother to don his overalls, and confidently prints in colour. But printing is only part of the job — he has now refined his costing, binding, distribution system, advertising, and all the consequent office work.

Don is forever experimenting with ways to make the material more useful in classrooms. Some books have an English translation in small type, others have two versions in Maori — an easy to read one and a more difficult, expanded script for older children and

those more confident in their Maori.

Books are mailed New Zealand wide to schools and individuals. There is a growing demand from fluent speakers and parents learning Maori who wish to read them to their children. Parents learning the language themselves find it helps improve their own command of the language as well as helping their children learn, if they read these books to them.

Of the 20 books so far produced, Don's favourite is **He Pepeha Aroha**, the story of the North Island mountains, printed with colour illustrations. This book has sold over 1000 copies. No charge was made but each one carried a request for a \$4 donation to cover costs.

Most of the books are sold for a mere \$2, with a colour cover and black and white illustrations inside.

"It is most important to keep costs down," says Don, "as schools have such limited budgets these days". The low costs are possible because of grants received, and the support of the local Rural Education Activities Programme, which paid Don's salary this year. In previous years both men willingly gave up their evenings and weekends to printing, collating and mailing the books, but now the enterprise has grown beyond the stage where it can be run by voluntary labour.

The venture must be put on a solid base, if it is to continue, Don insists.

"We need to make long term plans," he explains. "Scripts keep arriving and illustrators are waiting to work on them, but there is no point raising their hopes of seeing their work in print if we have to stop production at the end of this year." And Don is not sure whether it is worthwhile to advertise books any more, to add more names to the growing mailing list of schools and individuals who wish to hear of new publications.

The future looks bleak. "Although the Education Department officials are aware of our existence and verbally support our enterprise, they have not been forthcoming with firm offers of personnel or finance to keep the project running," says Don. "And although my salary was paid by REAP this year there is no guarantee that this will continue in 1984 as there are other pressing needs in this area."

He points out that they have proved the viability of the enterprise, and the need is growing all the time. With 120 Kohanga Reo already set up and a hundred more in the planning stages, more bilingual programmes in schools are inevitable, and the numbers of adult students of the language are increasing all round the country.

"What a waste it would be, if the contacts we have built up and the skills we have acquired were no longer able to be used to help fill the need for children's books in Maori."



John Hunia (seated) and Don Turnbull look at the paste up of their most recent book "Kei hea koe e pi?"