

MWWL executive meets the people

The national executive of the Maori Women's Welfare League recently had a chance to meet the people of Taitokerau. At the league's annual conference in May this year, it was decided to hold one meeting each year away from headquarters in Wellington.

This year's meeting on Nov 4 and 5 was held in Taitokerau because Whangarei is to be the venue for the 1984 annual conference. Whangarei branch members welcomed the visitors at the Northland Community College where the first night was spent with national president, Georgina Kirby chairing the session.

Miss Anne Delamere, League representative on a recent delegation to the Prime Minister and Minister of Maori Affairs to put the proposal that a permanent commission for the Maori language be established, asked for Executive support for a one day hui. This would bring together interested persons to discuss various aspects of the proposal, for instance alternatives for the organisational structure and funding of the proposed commission.

Though neither the Prime Minister nor the Minister of Maori Affairs had been enthusiastic about the need for a permanent commission, the delegation, comprising representatives from the League, the NZ Maori Council, Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga i nga Hahi Katoa o Aotearoa, the Maori and South Pacific Arts Council and the Bishopric of Aotearoa remained convinced that there was a need for a central, monitoring organisation and that the government should bear some responsibility for its funding. They agreed to support the hui in the hope that it would result in a plan and strategy to put before the government.

Miss Juliet Elworthy, Senior Advisory Officer in the Department of Social Welfare and the department's representative on League Executive, reported that a Maori Advisory Unit had been established within the Auckland Regional Office of Social Welfare. The Unit is to advise on policies and programmes appropriate to the needs of Maori people and assist in the development of the resources of the Maori community to meet special needs. In mid-October 1983 the first of the three advisory officer positions which the Unit comprises was advertised. Applicants are required to have a strong background in taha Maori and to be speakers of the Maori language.

Social Welfare financial assistance is now available to organisations which provide accommodation for street kids. From 1 October 1983 a programme of salary subsidies operates for house parents who are being financed by voluntary groups to provide this accommodation. To qualify for the salary subsidy, the groups must be providing full-



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time homes for street kids with mature adult, live-in supervisors.

On Saturday at noon Executive moved out to Poroti Marae where members were welcomed by delegates from the Manukau-Kaitiaki, Whangarei, Ruakaka, Ahipara, Awanui, Te Kao, Ngataki, Whangape, Panakareao, Ngatikahu, Kaikohe, Kamo, Mangakahia, Onerahi, Otangarei and Whangarei Girls' High School branches.

Delegates represented the whole spectrum of League membership, from the juniors still at school, through the young mothers, the older mothers, those stalwarts of our organisation, the foundation members nga whaea o te motu, Aunty Amy Tatana, Mere Petricevich and Kate Phillips; and then that famous fund raiser of the North, Aunty Nikki Edwards.

Taitokerau's newest branch, Raukaka, is based at Marsden Point and has 28 members, mostly mothers of young families, the majority new to the League, but many with League links in other parts of the country through their mothers and grandmothers.

Anne Fox, their president, spoke about the branch's involvement in Kohanga Reo, which is held in the Marsden hall twice a week. Anne said it seemed to her that, like the oil, the basis for her community's existence, which just lies in the ground until it is tapped, so the desire and enthusiasm for something like Kohanga Reo had been within the women all the time, just waiting to be brought to the surface.

Such is the enthusiasm for the project that Ruakaka has now seen the establishment of Kohanga Reo at Takahiwai and Waipu by women who originally travelled to Ruakaka but have now been able to set up their own Kohanga.

Anne said that the Joint Venture 2 developments at Marsden Point have brought new waves of families in to work. Kohanga Reo has been a focus for these families and the League branch is well situated to give the companionship that the women badly need in their new environment.

The Taitokerau Regional President, Mrs Roma Raupapera, asked the National President to take the chair. Mrs Kirby introduced Sir Graham Latimer who spoke briefly of the aims and structure of Maori International and answered questions from the floor.

The meeting then heard the reports of Area Representatives from Aotea, Tamaki Makaurau, Tainui, Waiariki, Ikaroa, Te Waipounamu and Taitokerau.

Recurring themes in the reports were the close involvement of branches with Kohanga Reo, their schools and their marae; strong interest in the development of the Matua Whangai programme promised by the Department of Maori Affairs to begin on 21 November; wide involvement in the teaching and production of craftwork.

A special concern in Te Waipounamu was the introduction of commercial dredging for cockles (pipis in the north), which are destined for marketing in North America as New Zealand little neke clams. Nine commercial permits have been granted which allowed the gathering of one tonne per week. Local people fear damage to the beds could lead to their extinction. The meeting voted to support the Otago Maori Executive in its endeavours to restrict the commercial lifting of cockles and to have withdrawn the licences already issued.

Taitokerau had the great pleasure of reporting to the meeting that Mrs Druis Barrett, Whangarei Branch, League nominee on the New Zealand Council of Social Services before its dissolution, had been asked by the Minister of Social Welfare to join the Social Advisory Council, her term to run to 1987. Druis asked for and was assured of the support of League Executive in any project of the Council and was warmly congratulated by the meeting.

Taitokerau had been involved in a series of hui with the health professionals who wished to find out how the Maori people felt about Area Health Boards. The first two meetings had been rather constrained, but by the third meeting, held in Awanui, everyone had relaxed, there was a good turnout of members and much progress was made.

The Maori people were strong in their appreciation of the work of the Public Health Nurses in their communities. The people highlighted the degree