

News

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME

The Manawatu Museum, Palmerston North, has instituted an oral history programme designed to record information relating to life in the Manawatu region to 1930. A pilot programme of interviews has been undertaken on topics concerning home life, family structure, material possessions, transport, schooling, church activities, sport, relationships with the Maori community, holidays, local and national politics and perception of change during the period. The tapes and transcripts will be kept permanently in the archives section of the Manawatu Research Library and will be available on request.

The Museum is interested in communicating with other institutions or individuals who are involved in similar oral history programmes. Please contact David Butts, Deputy Director, Manawatu Museum, P.O. Box 1867, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

THE NEW ZEALAND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

At the recent conference of historians at the University of Canterbury, a full meeting of those present resolved to form a New Zealand Historical Association. The general feeling of this business session, held on 20 August 1979, was that a necessary and important step was being taken and that much hard work lies ahead for those who want this body to become a truly national organization. The NZHA was formed both in a spirit of steady resolve and with a realistic assessment of difficulties.

It was in the memory of many present that this proposal was first advanced at the initial historian's conference at Palmerston North in 1967. Then, and until very recently, academic historians were not convinced of the need for formal union. This attitude has been significantly changed by the recent and alarming decline of history student numbers in the schools, and by a worsening economic climate in which cultural groups have to combine and fight to hold their positions. It is now necessary that all those who wish to see history given its proper place in the lives of New Zealanders should unite in putting their case to government, to the Education Department, to other authorities and to the community at large. The NZHA hopes to bring together students of history (using that phrase in its widest sense) from all parts of New Zealand and from all fields of historical activity.

The NZHA is especially concerned to encourage union at the regional level. This initiative has been taken by academic historians who recognize that they must actively seek closer contacts with schools and societies in their respective regions, if the Association is to put down proper grass-roots.

There is no intention of interfering in any current historical organizations, but the NZHA hopes to put to them the case for the added benefits of co-ordination.

The Christchurch meeting was greatly indebted to Dr I.J. Catanach, who presented a report which discussed the issues involved and set out a draft constitution. The objects of the new organization as proposed by Dr Catanach, in summary, are as follows: to hold conferences; to promote the teaching of history; to establish contact with other groups interested in the study of history; to promote historical research and the growth of archival resources; to act as a professional body representing to the government and the community the interests of New Zealanders in history.

It was decided that an interim committee of the NZHA should be located in Christchurch, and that its first major task should be to make preparations for a national conference early in 1981, when the new body should be fully launched. In the meantime the committee was to publicize NZHA throughout New Zealand; to revise the Catanach constitution, circularize their own draft for discussion and prepare a final draft for presentation to the conference. The committee was also empowered to set subscription rates and enrol members. A newsletter is to be produced within six months.

The following officers were elected: Mr W.J. Gardner, President; Dr G.W. Rice, Secretary; Dr C.N. Connolly, Treasurer. These officers were directed to form a full committee by co-opting representatives of the following: history teachers, teachers' colleges, local historical societies, libraries and archives, and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. A press statement has been sent to over twenty leading newspapers, both metropolitan and regional, and contact is being made with historical organizations.

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