

## CONFERENCE REPORT.

The tenth annual N.Z. Homebirth Conference, and the first bicultural Conference was held in New Plymouth, 12-14 May. Entitled Conceptions and Creations - Te Aitanga Me Te Putanga A Tangata A Hinengaro, it was efficiently organised and well attended. It opened on Saturday morning with a Maori Healing Session led by Margi Martin, a kuia from Parihaka. This was followed by a presentation - Te Foopu o Tokanui - when an excellent paper on Maori concepts of holistic health was presented by Bob Elliot from Tokanui.

Three Maori Perspective workshops shared moving and horrendous experiences of childbirth, past and present, within the callous pakeha maternity system. These expressed feelings of having been violated and dispossessed of their Maoriness. The response is to get back in touch with their Maoriness so there is a growing trend in this area for Maori women to have their babies at home with their own birth attendants.

Auntie Margi, the eldest of 18 children told of the birth of the first 16 children at home. The last two were born in a maternity hospital as her father, who always assisted at the births was blind. There her mother had chloroform and thought it was great. But Margi commented that these were the only births where she heard her mother moaning and groaning - no doubt because she was flat instead of kneeling/bending over a box, supported from behind by her husband.

There was a display of Maori plants, all labelled and the medicinal uses of each listed. The Patu family, we were told, had been the guardians of Maori herbal lore.

At the Sunday morning discussion session all home birth groups were urged to provide opportunities for their members to become familiar with biculturalism before the 1990 Conference to be held in Whangarei, which has been asked to provide a session on racism. It was suggested that speakers could be arranged through Project Waitangi, or your local polytech. It was also urged that each branch assess the needs of Maori women in their area. These were passed as remits.

(Two recent booklets on these issues are: Partnership Response, Policy Statement, Maori Affairs - \$6.00; and The Treaty of Waitangi and Social Policy Discussion Booklet No 1, Race Relations Conciliator, \$2.70)

Sunday morning was a sad, sad day when we learned that Beth Dreardon formerly of Thames and now of Whangarei had been seriously injured in a head-on car crash in which her three year old daughter, Connie, had been killed. We concentrated on sending her messages of healing and love. Beth is in Middlemore.

Other remits passed were:

- 1) To lobby the Government for funds to employ a full time National Homebirth resource worker;
- 2) This Conference calls for the immediate establishment of a direct entry midwifery course;
- 3) This Conference urgently calls for the re-establishment of midwives as independent practitioners;

Conf Report 2

- 4) This Conference calls for properly funded, trained home help service for home birth and early discharge families for a minimum of 10 days post partum;
- 5) This Conference demands that unbleached products be made available as a choice for all consumers.

Thanks must go to the collective that organised this stimulating and original Conference Jasmin Hales and her mother Margaret Hales were very busy and supported by many others.

J.D.