

## STOUT CENTRE REVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

For some time now we have felt the need of something more extensive than the Newsletters as a reflection of the Stout Centre's image of activities. During the academic year the Centre holds weekly seminars, most of which are eventually published somewhere, but are often not freely available to interested members. This issue is a start in the direction of a journal which will present shortened versions of papers given at seminars, interviews with researchers in residence, and accounts of conferences and other activities in the Centre. The name has thus been changed from Newsletter to the *Stout Centre Review*. The first two issues, October and December 1990 have been guest edited by John M. Thomson.

Jim Collinge  
DIRECTOR

### EDITORIAL

Since its foundation in 1984 the Stout Research Centre has steadily developed in a variety of directions. Its annual conferences have become an important feature of New Zealand cultural life. A less-known aspect of its activities has been the weekly seminars held in term time at which much original and provocative material has been presented.

We hope to enlarge this present modest publication by stages until it becomes a fully fledged journal in its own right. It supersedes the Newsletters 1-21, the last of which appeared in June 1990.

J.M. Thomson

### *Writing a grammar of Maori: some linguistic issues*

WINIFRED BAUER  
*John David Stout Fellow for 1990*

Writing a grammar of Maori appears to be a project that requires justification. In this paper, I endeavour to provide that. I take as my starting point some of the objections which have been voiced by members of the community.

There are many New Zealanders who believe that Maori does not have any grammar. For many such people, 'grammar' means lists of forms of nouns and verbs such as they had to learn for Latin at school. In that sense, it is true that Maori does not have much grammar. However, that is not the way in which linguists today use the term grammar. Today, the term grammar includes not only the study of such paradigms, but also the study of the rules which govern the order of words in sentences, and much else besides. In this sense, *all* languages have grammar: there is no language in which all orders of words are meaningful. Normally, the fewer the paradigms of the Latin type a language has, the greater the number of rules controlling word order. There is thus a great deal of Maori grammar to be studied.

Many people seem convinced that grammars are of no use. It is commonly argued that the best language learners are children acquiring their mother tongue naturally, and that they do not need grammar books. It is true that children learn best, but not true that they learn most efficiently. Pre-schoolers spend about 128,000 hours learning their mother tongue before the age of five. In contrast 5 years of French in a New Zealand school adds up to something like 1200 hours.