

# Discussions on the trans-Tasman nexus

**Australia-New Zealand economic relations will come under close scrutiny at one of the most high powered and comprehensive conferences of its kind 'Australia-New Zealand Economic Relations — Issues for the 1980s' to be held at ANU's Coombs Lecture Theatre from 12 to 14 August.**

The conference is intended to serve as a top level forum to stimulate public awareness and discussion of the main policy issues involved in the movement towards a closer economic relationship between the two countries.

Speakers at the conference will include key people in their respective areas from both countries including government officials, manufacturers, and representatives of trade unions, farmers' federations, seamen's unions and the major shipping company on the Tasman, Union Shipping, and academics.

It will be opened by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Resources, Mr Doug Anthony. It is being jointly sponsored by the University's Public Affairs Bureau and the Australia-New Zealand Foundations, Canberra and Wellington. While much of the stimulus and organisation is being provided by ANU, the conference is substantially funded by the A-NZ Foundations.

Among the topics for discussion will be the medium term perspectives on Australian and New Zealand economic performance and its implication for trans-Tasman trade. Sectoral panels will concentrate on agriculture and forest products, energy, sea transport, manufacturing and industrial adjustment, emergence of a common labour market and the implications for the trade union movement.

The Secretary of the A-NZ Foundation in Canberra, Mr David

Evans, described the conference as 'the most important venture' supported by the Foundation and said that the 'results of the conference, which brings together leaders in many fields, will be of interest to both Governments'.

A significant parallel event with the conference will be talks at the political level in Canberra on the future of the Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Brian Talboys, and the Australian Government. The conference at ANU will give people with an interest in the ministerial talks an opportunity to express their views in a public forum.

The discussions on economic relations between the two countries received considerable stimulus when the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser, visited Wellington

in March this year for consultations with his New Zealand counterpart, Mr R.D. Muldoon, about the prospects for establishing a closer economic relationship between the two countries. The forthcoming ministerial talks in Canberra will review the progress so far.

Among some of those watching the conference with particular interest will be Sir Peter Derham, Chairman of the A-NZ Foundation in Australia. The New Zealand Foundation will be represented by Mr Ken Footer. The Australian Foundation has been very active in promoting relations between the two countries at different levels. It has arranged visits to Australia of New Zealand journalists and parliamentarians, and commissioned studies on particular aspects relating to the two countries. But the Foundation is overstretched as the demand for its services has already outstripped its resources.

ANU has people with particular expertise about aspects of New Zealand on its staff and can be expected to make a substantial contribution to the promotion of a new economic climate between Australia and New Zealand. In fact several members of the University are closely involved with the organisation of the forthcoming conference. Two of them, Alan and Robin Burnett, recently visited New Zealand to contact various people and organisations for the planning of the conference.

An interesting feature of the conference is that although economic discussions will dominate proceedings, non-economic issues will be treated as well. There will be a dinner address by Professor Geoffrey Blainey entitled 'On the Cultural and Social Dimensions of the Australia-New Zealand Relationship'. At the conclusion of the conference Mr Anthony will open the 'Tangata Exhibition' at the National Library.