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Head, Heart and Hand:
Studio Pottery in Nelson
1956 – 1976

Vic Evans
2007

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A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History at Massey University

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Abstract

This thesis considers the growth of the studio pottery movement in New Zealand between 1956 and 1976. It uses Nelson as a case study to represent trends that took place across New Zealand. It seeks to explain the spectacular growth of interest in hand-made pottery and the surge in participation at both the amateur and professional level and the effects that this had on the movement.

The people who were involved in the revival of studio pottery were, in general, relatively well-educated and prosperous individuals who had experienced changes that had taken place within the New Zealand education system from the late 1930s. Others had similar experiences overseas. In New Zealand they were also the beneficiaries of a relatively stable, highly protected and prosperous economy. Furthermore, New Zealand was subject to the same influences that impacted on individuals overseas – issues relating to work and play and the place of women in society.

Overseas experts introduced the pioneers of the New Zealand movement to pottery traditions based on a confused blend of Anglo-Oriental craft philosophies. The experts also linked their beliefs to middle-class unease about industrialisation in the Western world. When the movement reached a level of participation that indicated it would have a significant cultural and economic impact the supporters of the imported tradition began a national organisation and assigned to themselves the role of guardians of the tradition. They attempted to define what ‘standards’ should be adhered to and, as a result, who could exhibit their work in national exhibitions. The standards were based on the Anglo-Oriental traditions that were largely foreign to most New Zealand potters and the buying public. Potters needed to adapt the traditions to be financially viable.

This thesis will show that many participants in the movement had no difficulty selling their work to a public that had an almost insatiable appetite for hand-made pottery. Because the ‘standards’ set by the national organisation were largely irrelevant to many potters who did not seek national recognition, the organisation began to lose control of the movement. A second generation of potters, many of whom did wish to make their mark nationally, were not prepared to accept the controls of the pioneers so, by the end of the period this thesis considers, major changes within the movement were underway.

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Vic Evans

Abbreviations

AJHR	Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives.
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library.
NZP	New Zealand Potter magazine.
NZPG	New Zealand Potters' Guild.
NZSP	New Zealand Society of Potters.
NCP	Nelson Community Potters.
NIDC	Nelson Industrial Development Company. Also known as the Nelson Industrial Corporation and the Nelson Industrial Promotion Co. Ltd.
CPN	Craft Potters Nelson.

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Introduction

On becoming the new Director of Nelson's Suter Art Gallery in 1976, Austin Davies faced a financial problem. Needing to generate income, he organised a huge craft pottery exhibition and sale: 'Queues for the exhibition stretched around Queen's Gardens' lake. "We charged people $2 to get in and made a $13,000 profit – it paid my salary for the next year,"'[1] he recounted.[2] A number of years later, reflecting on his first years as a potter, former Czech refugee and internationally known potter, Mirek Smišek, wrote, 'In the nineteen fifties there were no potters in Nelson and in other parts of New Zealand pottery making was a part-time activity.'[3]

Between 1956, when Smišek became New Zealand's first professional studio potter, working in Nelson, and the 1976 exhibition at the Suter Art Gallery, the number of people involved in the studio pottery movement nationally had ballooned from one committed craftsman to thousands of full time potters, enthusiastic amateurs, and appreciative supporters and customers.[4] As a result of this growth Nelson gained an international reputation as a centre of excellence in studio pottery.[5] Smišek appears to have sensed the potential for growth when he decided to make his living as a full-time potter in 1956: 'It [the support of people in Nelson] gave you immediately a feeling of goodwill everywhere and this positiveness – I knew I was doing the right thing.'[6]

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[1] Mic Dover, 'Portrait of the Artist', *Nelson Mail,* 20 May 2006, p.15.
[2] *Nelson Evening Mail*, 5 January 1977. Davies planned for the profit (then $4,800) to go towards the gallery modernisation fund. This earlier interview took place during the exhibition, which carried on for approximately another month giving the figure quoted.
[3] Mirek Smišek in correspondence to Peter Gibbs, circa 1990, pp. 2 – 3.
[4] By the late 1970s it was estimated that there were 2000 professional potters in New Zealand and 20,000 amateurs. See *New Zealand Potter* (NZP), 23:1, 1981, p. 2. In 1980 Peter Cape put the number at 5000 'currently working' and '2000 of them … potting full-time'. See Peter Cape, *Please Touch. A Survey of the Three-Dimensional Arts in New Zealand*, Auckland: Collins, 1980, p. 80.
[5] One estimate put the number of club members in Nelson at 240. See Jim Chappèll in correspondence to David Nightingale, Nelson Community Potters Incorporated, 10 December 1976, Tasman Bays Heritage Trust / The Nelson Provincial Museum, Archives collection, AG 277.
[6] Mirek Smišek, interviewed by Dr. Damian H. Skinner, 17 February 1999.

George Wingfield Digby, one of the earliest writers on the modern studio pottery movement, defined a studio potter as follows:

> The artist-potter (or 'studio-potter', as he is often called) makes his pots with his own hands from the primary materials, right through the processes of designing, preparing the clay, throwing[7] on the wheel, decorating, glazing, and firing. He may of course employ help and some mechanical aids … but in fact the work from beginning to end is his, directly under his control and responsive at every stage to his initiative and inspiration'.[8]

Digby's definition, with its emphasis on the control of the processes by the potter, informs the discussion of studio pottery in this thesis. The thesis will seek answers to the following questions: why did studio pottery attract so many New Zealanders between the mid-1950s and the mid-1970s, and what changes had taken place in New Zealand society that actively encouraged the development of the movement during this time? In seeking answers to these questions the thesis will also investigate why and how the imported traditions that formed the basis of the movement were altered to suit the needs and desires of the local participants and their communities, and the demands of the commercial world. Using Nelson, where practical, as a case study, it will argue that between 1956 and 1976 a set of cultural, social, political and economic conditions converged to create a dynamic industry with which many New Zealanders felt an affinity, as creators, as businesspeople, and as consumers.

Literature Review

The studio pottery movement has received attention from a wide range of authors and commentators both contemporarily and since the period that this thesis is concerned with. The literature that is significant to this thesis can be separated into four broad categories: international and New Zealand art histories, influential international work dealing with major ceramic trends and philosophies, works by potters, often relating to functional aspects to their work

[7] The term 'throwing' refers to the making of pottery by hand on a potter's wheel.
[8] George Wingfield Digby, *The Work of the Modern Potter in England,* London: John Murray, 1952. For a definition that compares 'art pottery' of the nineteenth century with the work of 'studio', 'modern or 'artist' potters of the twentieth century see: Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 30.

but sometimes commenting on their philosophy, and general histories that include pottery – commonly in chapters dealing with art and culture.

New Zealand art historians have shown some interest in pottery, but their concerns are usually centred on the aesthetic merits or otherwise of the work produced by potters, as well as the intellectual motivation that inspired individual works. One example is Leo King's 1989 masterate thesis on two fellow potters, Peter Stichbury and Graeme Storm.[9] Most of the thesis examines the individual works by the two potters but King does provide an international and local background to the studio pottery movement and he recognises the importance of the Anglo-Oriental tradition that played such a major role in the 1950s. King also acknowledges the role those educational changes in the 1940s and 1950s played in inspiring potters such as Stichbury and Storm to begin learning the craft.[10] Perhaps because of the perceived dichotomy between the functional and non-functional nature of pottery, serious analytical consideration within the art world has, however, been limited. Pottery, particularly functional pottery that could be used in the home, did not sit comfortably with supposedly more cerebral work such as paintings and sculptures and therefore was not as worthy of analysis or serious criticism. In addition, the proliferation of potters, both professional and amateur, usually without training in the established art world, placed potters somewhere between 'artists' and 'tradesmen' and therefore not to be taken as seriously.

Amongst the earliest, and certainly the most influential books written on studio pottery was a polemic about beauty, art and pottery techniques written by the English potter and philosopher Bernard Leach.[11] Leach advocated a linking of East and West through better understanding of the crafts of the Orient, and how that understanding might help overcome the decline in standards, both artistic

[9] Leo King, 'Influences in New Zealand ceramics present in the work of Peter Stichbury and Graeme Storm', MA Thesis in Art History, University of Auckland, 1989.
[10] Ibid., p. 32.
[11] Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book*, London: Faber and Faber, 1940, was his first and most important book. See chapter one for reactions to the book.

and moral, in the West.[12] His ideas contained a spiritual dimension as well as aesthetic ideals. These ideas were linked to concerns held by some sections of British society about the detrimental impact industrialisation was having on society in the western world. The concerns were also being coupled with middle-class aspirations for a return to a gentler, more caring rural society that they believed had been destroyed by industrialisation.

Leach's work was unchallenged during his lifetime but after his death in 1979, writers began to contest his philosophy and the tradition he had established. Edmund de Waal, in particular, questioned the whole foundation of Leach's domination of the movement by claiming that: 'Leach's authority in the West was constructed around the mythic story of his knowledge and insight into Japan, of his apprenticeship into the Kenzan school and his "natural" absorption into Japanese life.'[13] Later, John Britt would claim '… that *mingei*[14] [the philosophical basis of Leach's ideas] was a notion fabricated, post facto, in an effort to save the ailing Japanese craft industry from the impending perils of Western industrialism'. [15] Britt argued that 'the glorious legend of Bernard Leach is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile with the facts.'[16] Nevertheless, Leach had his supporters. But even Emmanuel Cooper, a fellow potter and Leach's sympathetic biographer,[17] recognised that Leach was capable of constructing a very favourable image of himself and his place in the ceramic world. Tanya Harrod placed the modern studio pottery movement in a wider context in her comprehensive examination of the crafts in twentieth century Britain.[18] Her work describes 'a second history of English craft' that 'was both modern and anti-

[12] Leach's ambivalent attitude to the Orient can be found in his diary entries written over a fifty-year period and published in the book: Bernard Leach, *Beyond East and West: Memoirs, Portraits and Essays*, London: Faber & Faber, 1978. See also Bernard Leach, *A Potter in Japan 1952 – 1954*, London: Faber and Faber, 1960.
[13] Edmund De Waal, 'Homo Orientalis: Bernard Leach and the Image of the Japanese Craftsman', *Journal of Design History*, 10:4, 1997, p.355. See also, Edmund De Waal, *20th Century Ceramics,* London: Thames & Hudson, 2003.
[14] *Mingei* is discussed in Chapter One.
[15] John Britt, 'The "Unknown Craftsman" is Dead', http://www.criticalceramics.org/articles/unknown.htm, retrieved 27 July 2006.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Emmanuel Cooper, *Bernard Leach Life and Work,* New Haven: Paul Mellon, 2003.
[18] Harrod, *Crafts in Britain*.

modern'[19] and she refers to Leach's place in the history of craft within this framework. A version of this conflict of ideas played out in New Zealand between the followers of Leach (anti-modern) and the second generation (modern).

Given that Leach's position within the international studio pottery movement was founded on his elucidation of *mingei* theory, any analysis of the ideas associated with it is a valuable resource. One of the most comprehensive interpretations of *mingei* is by Yuko Kikuchi,[20] in a book that emerged from the author's doctorial studies. The theoretical argument for Kikuchi's thesis is constructed on a framework of 'Orientalism', developed in 1978 by Edward Said,[21] and post-Saidian theories that were critical of the lack of analysis in the Orientalism model.[22] Kikuchi's theories are only relevant to this thesis to the extent that they explain the fragility of the theory advanced by Leach. In New Zealand, attempts to understand *mingei* theory were usually more simplistic. Dianne and Peter Beatson, for example, described *mingei* as, '…[a] school based on a philosophy of formal simplicity, honesty of function and integrity of raw materials. It aimed at creating domestic ware for everyday use, not sophisticated art for the elite.'[23] They were, however, conscious of the contradiction created by the image of urbane academics advocating the production of unsophisticated folk crafts.

In New Zealand, texts by potters tended to be concerned with the purely functional aspects of their working lives. Two Nelson potters, Harry Davis and Jack Laird, published works that expounded upon the place of pottery in society as they saw it. Davis produced a book on self-sufficiency for potters with a brief

[19] Ibid., p. 9. Harrod's 'second history' is a reference to a 'first history' of crafts – The Arts and Crafts Movement of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.
[20] Yuko Kikuchi, *Japanese Modernisation and Mingei Theory: Cultural Nationalism and Oriental Orientalism*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2004.
[21] Edward W Said, Orientalism, London: Penguin, 1978.
[22] Kikuchi, p. xvi.
[23] Dianne and Peter Beatson *The Crane and the Kotuku: Artistic Bridges between New Zealand and Japan*, Palmerston North: Manawatu Art Gallery, 1994, p.10.

introduction outlining his philosophical motivation.[24] It was published in 1987, two years after he died and at a time when the pioneer New Zealand potters had been supplanted by a second generation. Davis had articulated his thinking during fundraising lectures, but he tended to lecture on his concerns about the place of art in the world, environmental issues, or his socialist beliefs about third world poverty and materialism.[25] He did not write about the rise of the studio pottery movement in New Zealand, although interviews show that he had firm opinions on the cultural and social place of pottery in modern society.[26] Laird presented his ideas on the place of the craftsman in a modern society in pamphlet form.[27] Potters' concerns about where their craft sat in the art world and the social issues that surrounded their craft will form a part of this thesis, which will examine the writings of Davis and Laird in conjunction with the views they, and others, have recorded in a number of interviews.

Heather Stirling, using the *New Zealand Potter* (NZP) magazine as a dominant source, produced a somewhat prosaic dissertation on studio pottery that considered the growth of the movement. It outlined the development of studio pottery in New Zealand over a twenty period from 1958 to 1978 but avoided any in-depth analysis of the cultural, social, political and economic reasons which might explain the growth of the movement.[28] She quoted liberally from the magazine, and so projected an image of the movement presented through the words of the writers in the magazine rather than her own.

The NZP magazine, first published in 1958, presented potters and interested readers with an assortment of technical advice about pottery and articles ranging over a wide assortment of topics, from potters' philosophies to items of

[24] Harry Davis, *The Potter's Alternative*, North Ryde, NSW: Methuen, 1987.
[25] Harry Davis, 'An Historical Review of Art, Commerce and Craftsmanship', Lectures given 1968.
[26] Harry and May Davis, interviewed by Karen Patterson, 3 October 1984.
[27] J. D. Laird, 'The Craftsman in Rural Communities and the Work of the Rural Industries Bureau in England and its Possible Application in New Zealand,' Department of University Extension Victoria University of Wellington, 1960.
[28] Heather Stirling, 'A History of the Development of the New Zealand Studio Potters Movement as Reflected in the New Zealand Potter Magazine', Special Study, Brighton Polytechnic, 1979.

interest from overseas. Critiques of exhibitions, letters to the editor and numerous photographs were also major features of each issue. A noticeable trend in the magazine as the movement grew was the decline in articles on major overseas potters and the increased reporting on New Zealand potters. The NZP is employed extensively as a source throughout this thesis.[29]

The writings of New Zealand craft writers and art critics who were interested in the movement, but who were not participants, also reflect the lack of critical analysis of the reasons for the growth of interest in studio pottery. Peter Cape was one of the few early commentators who did attempt to place the movement within a social and cultural framework. In 1969 he told New Zealanders that the craft movement was part of a worldwide trend and that they should increasingly accept the crafts as recognition of a national identity.[30] In 1980, when he published his second book on crafts, he explained the interest in the crafts in New Zealand as a part of the national character that derived from New Zealand's pioneering history.[31] In both books he defined two distinct groups of craftspeople in the field of ceramics. The first he called the "craft in art" group – 'potters who work largely in domestic ware, … people concerned with good design, and the pursuit of aesthetics within the limitation of function.' The second he labelled the "art in craft" group – ' … sculptors … and potters who are prepared, if necessary, to eliminate the strictly useful aspect of their work in favour of making things that are things-in-themselves, without any function other than the aesthetic or decorative.'[32] Cape was convinced that the divide between art and craft lay in the past association between '"art" [which] carried with it connotations of all that was desirable – leisure, money and the membership of an élite society – while "craft" still evoked ideas of labour, repetitive activity, and dirty hands.'[33] New Zealanders believed they lived in an egalitarian society and therefore such distinctions were frowned upon. It was a discussion that would go on for many years. Potters such as Jack Laird found the debate tiresome.

[29] *New Zealand Potter*, Vol. 1:1, 1958 – Vol 23:2, 1981.
[30] Peter Cape, *Artists and Craftsmen in New Zealand*, Auckland: Collins, 1969, p.9.
[31] Cape, *Please Touch*, p. 11.
[32] Cape, *Artists and Craftsmen*, p.13, and Cape, *Please Touch*, p.11.
[33] Cape, *Please Touch*, p. 19 - 20.

His response to the question about whether pottery was an art form or a craft was that '… [the question] will only deliver a wrong answer.'[34]

Many general texts commenting on New Zealand society between the 1950s and the 1970s devoted a chapter to the arts, and occasionally studio pottery was mentioned - along with other craft disciplines. P. A. Tomory, a British trained art historian who was Director of the Auckland City Art Gallery from 1956 to1965, identified the importance of economic factors, such as import restrictions, and the cultural influences, such as Japanese pottery, on the development of the movement in New Zealand.[35] In 1968, when he wrote his short commentary, he was astonished at the number of potters – there were 'at least six working full time'.[36] Juliet Batten, who held a PhD in English literature and became a fabric artist,[37] examined the different roles of women and men in the arts. She described how the motivation and materials were often different and how gender roles were challenged in the 1970s. [38] Anne Else also examined the role of women in art and craft in a chapter in a book she also edited.[39] She identified the structures that women formed to pursue their craft: 'small, informal associations, often taking shape around a course or teacher. Some of these groups, notably in the crafts, eventually came together under the umbrella of a national federation.'[40] She also recognised the dominant role women had played in the founding of the studio pottery movement, its administration and as active participants. In addition, she acknowledged that they 'co-operated closely with the men on a thoroughly equal basis across all aspects of their craft, including technology'.[41]

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[34] Jack Laird, interview by Margaret Pope, 1998.
[35] P. A. Tomory, 'Art' in A. L. McLeod, (ed.), *The Pattern of New Zealand Culture,* New York: Cornell University Press, 1968, pp.193 – 196.
[36] Ibid., p. 194.
[37] Juliet Batten, 'Art and Identity' in David Novitz and Bill Willmott (eds), *Culture and Identity in New Zealand,* Wellington: GP Books, 1989, p. 292. See also Philip Clarke, 'Juliet Batten', *New Zealand Crafts,* Vol. 9, August 1984, pp. 18 – 19.
[38] Novitz and Willmott, pp. 220 - 225.
[39] Anne Else (ed.), *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand, Ngā Ropū Wāhine o te Motu,* Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993.
[40] Ibid. p. 447.
[41] Ibid, pp. 453 – 454.

Two public servants supported and encouraged the development of studio pottery in New Zealand and both referred to the movement in their writings. Dr William (Bill) Sutch, a well-known writer on social and economic issues and permanent secretary of the Department of Industries and Commerce from 1958 to 1965,[42] linked the maturity of a country's economy to the maturity of the nation itself and identified all the arts as important indicators of maturity.[43] Dr Clarence Beeby, an education reformer and Director of Education from 1939 to 1959,[44] supported changes to the New Zealand school curriculum that advanced the teaching of arts and crafts in schools and integrated them into other subject areas. In addition to their ideas on the place of studio pottery in New Zealand's economy and culture, both Sutch and Beeby wrote widely in their areas of expertise and this thesis calls on their writings to compare government policies with the experiences of individuals associated with the movement. Sutch's economic policies supported and encouraged studio pottery but his ideas were not universally accepted and have been the subject of criticism. An example of this can be found in Michael Bassett's attack on socialism in New Zealand in *The State in New Zealand 1840 – 1984: Socialism Without Doctrines?*[45]

General New Zealand histories often refer to the place of art in their commentary but only very occasionally studio pottery. W. H. Oliver's chapter on the arts in the 1981 edition of *The Oxford History of New Zealand* did not

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[42] Brian Easton, 'William Ball Sutch'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 April 2006 URL: http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/, retrieved 7 April 2006. Sutch produced over 250 monograph, articles, pamphlets, reviews, reports, addresses and submissions. See note 1 in A. M. Endres, 'The Political Economy of W B Sutch: Towards a Critical Appreciation', *New Zealand Economic Papers*, Vol. 20, 1986, p. 34 and M. Evans, 'The Writings of Dr. W. B. Sutch in John L. Robson and Jack Shallcrass, (eds), *Spirit of an Age: New Zealand in the Seventies. Essays in Honour of W. B. Sutch*, Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1975.

[43] W. B. Sutch, *Towards Economic Maturity,* Wellington: Department of Industries and Commerce, 1963, p. 95.

[44] Renwick, William, 'Beeby, Clarence Edward 1902 – 1998'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, URL: http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/ , retrieved 10 November 2006. Relevant works by C. E. Beeby include, *Which are the Frills in Education?* Wellington: NZEI, 1974.and *The Biography Of An Idea. Beeby On Education,* Wellington, NZCER, 1992.

[45] Michael Bassett, *The State in New Zealand 1840 – 1984: Socialism Without Doctrines?*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998, pp. 295 – 297.

comment on studio pottery at all and this remained unchanged in subsequent 1987 and 1988 editions even when it was clear that studio pottery had become a major craft in New Zealand.[46] A chapter in the 1991 edition by Peter Simpson, a Nelson born writer, curator and critic, did recognise that pottery was 'probably the area of craft which has most practitioners, most support from the public, and the greatest recognition for its accomplishments both within New Zealand and overseas'.[47] The leaders in the craft acknowledged in the chapter represented the 'second generation' potters while the founders, the main emphasis of this thesis, remained unacknowledged. Works produced for the general public, such as *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand* edited by Keith Sinclair in 1990, referred to studio pottery in a dutiful way: 'Pottery is very popular and the potters have established a quite excellent local tradition.'[48]

The lack of a comprehensive analysis of the underlying reasons for the growth and robustness of the movement may have been related to a lack of controversy surrounding the craft, writers' uncertainty about the place of the studio pottery movement within the history of art, or historians' limited understanding of the craft. Bill Oliver stated: 'The arts and society have a complex relationship, one that contains both affinity and disharmony'.[49] It could be argued that where studio pottery was concerned, the level of affinity for New Zealanders was very high and affinity is not as interesting as disharmony for historians.

[46] W. H. Oliver, 'The Awakening Imagination, 1940 – 1980', in W. H. Oliver and B. R Williams, (eds), *The Oxford History of New Zealand,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, pp. 430 – 461.
[47] Peter Simpson, 'The Recognition of Difference', in Rice, Geoffrey W. (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand,* 2nd ed. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 584. See also The New Zealand Book Council, http://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/writers/simpsonpeter.html .
[48] Keith Sinclair, 'Hard Times (1972 – 1989)' in Keith Sinclair, (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 373.
[49] Oliver, (1981), p. 565.

Sources:

This thesis calls on a wide range of sources, in addition to the literature referred to above, to explain the cultural, social, political and economic conditions that permitted and encouraged the development of an energetic studio pottery movement in Nelson and elsewhere. Amongst these sources are the official and personal documents deposited in New Zealand's national archives and libraries, the newspapers of the day and the letters that were exchanged by the participants. The Minutes of the New Zealand Society of Potters (NZSP), for example, disclose the difficulties the organisation had with the growing number of potters, while personal documents, such as May Davis' concerns about her role in the pottery partnership with Harry Davis, reveal the conflicts that did not appear in the glossy publications. Many overseas articles, particularly those written in more recent times, challenged the role of Leach and others in the revival of studio pottery. Some have also raised questions about the long accepted explanations for the success of the studio pottery movement and these views have been considered.

The spoken words of the participants in the movement are a fundamental source of information that adds a personal dimension to the history of the movement. Moyra Elliott and Dr Damian Skinner interviewed over fifty participants for a yet to be published book with the working title, 'Cone Ten Down: The Influences of the Anglo-Oriental on New Zealand Pottery'.[50] The interviews provide a candid insight into the world of studio pottery as seen through the eyes of those who featured most prominently in the literature. The emphasis on the leading potters, critics and writers, however, has resulted in a one-dimensional understanding of the movement. It was therefore important to discover how those people who did not feature in the magazines and books understood the growth of studio pottery and how it impacted on their lives. To achieve this goal I carried out a series of interviews with those who attended the pottery classes and became members of the clubs in Nelson. What is revealed is a picture of delighted surprise at the success the movement achieved but also

[50] Moyra Elliott and Damian Skinner, 'Cone Ten Down: the influences of the Anglo-Oriental on New Zealand pottery', (working title.) Creative New Zealand Grants, 2003, 2005.

a confused understanding about why the movement was successful and what the underlying philosophy really was.

Chapter Outline:

This thesis is not concerned with the aesthetic qualities of the work produced by the potters who were part of the studio pottery movement but with the cultural, social, political and economic factors that gave rise to the movement and sustained it. The chapters have been set out thematically but with some interconnection between them. Nelson is at the centre of the study, although not the sole focus, because it provides an example of how a range of participants were involved as hobbyists, semi-professionals, professionals and the owners of semi-industrial enterprises.

Chapter One investigates the Oriental and Occidental influences on the studio pottery movement in Nelson and New Zealand. It considers the pivotal role of English potter and author Bernard Leach. His notions of the beneficial influence of Eastern culture on Western thinking and his search for spiritual fulfilment dominated many aspects of the studio pottery movement internationally. Leach was influenced by the Japanese philosopher Sōetsu Yanagi, who raised the work of unknown craftsmen of the past to new levels of veneration. The chapter considers what aspects of Leach's ideas were practical in Nelson during the mid-twentieth century revival of the craft and how potters reacted to conflicting interpretations of those ideas. The discussion considers how the potters of Nelson interpreted Yanagi and Leach's philosophy in their daily lives. Also examined are attitudes to Leach's dominance at the time, and ideas about his influence that have been expressed since. The chapter discusses the conflict between the cult of the 'unknown craftsman' and western ideas of individual achievement to ascertain how Eastern ideas of anonymity were assimilated or rejected in New Zealand.

Chapter Two looks at ideas about education that had been evolving prior to and during the period, and the social conditions that prevailed in New Zealand and overseas during this time. The chapter seeks to determine the extent to which

education influenced the growth in interest in hand-made pottery. Part of this discussion looks at the development of more liberal education policies in the 1930s and 1940s that encouraged the teaching of art and crafts in schools and directly or indirectly influenced future potters. This chapter takes into account the increasing interest in the crafts in education both at the compulsory level and within adult education and discusses the role played by Dr Clarence Beeby and places this in context.

The chapter considers the changing social conditions in New Zealand and the way in which increased prosperity encouraged many New Zealanders to pursue their interests in art and crafts as makers and customers. It examines expectations of increased leisure time and that some people would wish to use their increased leisure to pursue creative ideas. An environment was created that encouraged mass participation in crafts and led to the establishment of numerous pottery classes and clubs. Both men and women seized the opportunity pottery making presented to have an existence separate from the traditional roles of provider, homemaker or child minder. The formation of clubs in the 1960s and 70s where men and women could meet and work away from their normal job and outside the home, with individuals who shared their interest in pottery, is considered as a part of the growing interest in life styles that may have differed from the accepted norms of the times. All of the above issues had an impact in Nelson but the developments were part of national and international trends as well.

Chapter Three considers the role of the economy and its effects on people in post-World War Two New Zealand. It examines how the economic depression of the 1930s, and the restrictions of the war years influenced the decisions taken by politicians and economists, and it considers how those decisions impacted on the lives of people interested in making pottery. The period between the 1950s and the 1970s saw a number of rises and falls in economic prosperity[51] but because of humanitarian economic policies based on pre-war

[51] See *Appendix I.*

concerns there was never a return to the deprivation of the 1930s. Dr Sutch's ideas on building New Zealand's manufacturing industries and import substitution, along with government imposed import restrictions, form the basis of the examination of studio potters' capacity to establish viable businesses. Chapter Three also considers other political initiatives, such as wage and factory regulations, which impacted on the decisions made by those who wished to increase the size of their business or pass their skills and knowledge onto a new generation of studio potters.

The chapter investigates the economic factors that permitted many potters, often with quite limited skills, to earn an income from their craft. A period of sustained economic prosperity allowed New Zealanders to acquire goods such as hand-made pottery that, in earlier times, would have been considered luxury items. As a result, there was an increased demand for pottery that was different and new – sometimes even when the quality was not of a high standard. An economic environment existed that was conducive to making a reasonable living from pottery and even allowed for the development of relatively large businesses by New Zealand standards. The chapter explains how this impacted on the different groups of Nelson potters – hobbyists, semi-professionals and professionals.

Chapter Four examines the politics of the studio pottery movement. The founding of the NZP magazine in 1958 and the establishment of the NZSP in 1963 gave potters a means to express their thoughts on how they might influence and educate politicians, the general public or each other. The founding members of the NZSP set in place rigorous exhibition selection procedures that either permitted potters to become full exhibiting members of the NZSP or excluded them from this 'exalted' position. The chapter investigates the weaknesses in the rules and the constitution that governed them. Also considered is whether the rules were primarily set to control standards of pottery or limit the number of newcomers into the craft. The politics surrounding the Society were important to the potters of Nelson because the number of professional potters was increasing more rapidly there than in most other

regions in New Zealand and exhibiting with the NZSP was a path to national recognition. The professionals, in particular, needed to test their skills against the best in New Zealand. The chapter also considers how potters in Nelson managed the limitations imposed by the NZSP.

Conclusion

Between 1956 and 1976 New Zealand's studio pottery movement, if measured in the number of people involved, was a story of success. The nation took pride in the achievement of its best-known potters who, they felt, exemplified a national characteristic – creative but practical.[52] Many 'ordinary' people also discovered an activity that gave them a creative interest, new friendships and a sense of worth in their lives - even if it did not necessarily lead to fame and fortune. For some, the most astonishing aspect of the movement, however, was that it provided them, often quite unexpectedly, with a living and a way of life they found very satisfying. This thesis investigates the growth of the studio pottery movement and the impact it had on the lives of those who participated in it.

[52] Cape, *Please Touch*, p. 77 - 8.

Chapter One

The Leach / Yanagi / Hamada tradition: Domination from Abroad

The ideas of the English potter and writer Bernard Leach dominated studio pottery in Nelson for several decades from the early 1950s. Leach's influence initially was strongest in Britain, particularly after the publication of his seminal work, *A Potter's Book*[1] in 1940. However, within twenty years most potters in Nelson were concentrating on his techniques or were aware of his philosophy. In Nelson, the strength of his influence was determined by the advocacy of one of his admirers, the first full-time potter in the region and future Leach employee, Mirek Smišek. In the early 1960s May and Harry Davis, two of his early employees who migrated to Nelson, also offered practical examples of his ideas in the region. This chapter will examine the philosophical basis of Leach's ideas and will show how his philosophy became entrenched within the studio pottery movement in Nelson. The studio pottery movement in Nelson was founded on a confused interpretation of Leach's ideas, which was itself based on a misunderstanding of a foreign philosophy.

Leach was born in Hong Kong in 1887, the son of a colonial judge.[2] His maternal grandparents were missionaries in Japan[3] and he spent some time there as a child, before moving to Britain to start his education in 1897[4]. He enrolled at the London School of Art at the age of twenty-one, after receiving an inheritance from his recently deceased father.[5] Here the attraction of Japan continued due to the influence of one of his tutors, Frank Brangwyn, who was an ardent admirer of Japanese culture and art.[6] Leach, through Brangwyn, inherited the interest in Japanese culture that had pervaded the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 1890s. Brangwyn had served a four-year apprenticeship under

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1 Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book*, London: Faber and Faber, 1940.
2 Bernard Leach, *Beyond East and West: Memoirs, Portraits and Essays*, London: Faber & Faber, 1978, p. 23.
3 Leach Pottery Ltd., 'The Leach Pottery', URL: http://www.leachpottery.com/ retrieved 20 July 2006.
4 Emmanuel Cooper, *Bernard Leach Life and Work,* New Haven: Paul Mellon, 2003, p.13.
5 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
6 Ibid., p. 32.

one the movement's founders, William Morris, who was interested in Oriental and Japanese design.[7] The similarity between the ideas of Morris and the Japanese philosopher Sōetsu Yanagi, discussed below, are striking and suggest that ideas that Yanagi promoted about art made for the people by the people, the value of 'community' over 'individualism' and an emphasis on handmade rather than machine-made work may have originated within the Arts and Crafts Movement.[8] By the early twentieth century the Arts and Crafts Movement was no longer a major influence on the arts community in Britain but its legacy did have an impact on the British middle classes between the wars through the buildings and objects left behind.[9] This was the cultural environment that Leach returned to when he left Japan to set up his pottery at St Ives in Cornwall in 1920.

Leach departed for Japan in 1909 with a limited understanding of Japanese society. He did not speak or read Japanese.[10] His knowledge was based predominantly on the romantic notions that circulated in Edwardian society at the time[11] - ideas inspired, for example, by the sentimental writings of the 'stylist'[12] Lafcadio Hearn.[13] In Japan Leach planned to teach etching and sell his own work.[14]

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[7] Ibid., p. 33.
[8] Brian Moeran, 'Bernard Leach and the Japanese Folk Craft Movement: the Formative Years', *Journal of Design History,* 2:2&3, 1989, p.139. See also Yuko Kikuchi, *Japanese Modernisation and Mingei Theory: Cultural Nationalism and Oriental Orientalism*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2004, p. 3.
[9] Harrod, *Crafts in Britain*, p.9. See also Wendy Kaplan, (Consultant), *Encyclopedia of Arts and Crafts: The International Arts Movement 1850 – 1920,* Sydney: Doubleday, 1989, p. 173.
[10] Moeran, p. 141. See also Emmanuel Cooper, *Bernard Leach Life and Work,* New Haven: Paul Mellon, 2003, p. 35.
[11] Edmund De Waal, 'Homo Orientalis: Bernard Leach and the Image of the Japanese Craftsman', *Journal of Design History*, 10:4, 1997, p. 361.
[12] Bernard Leach, *Beyond East and West: Memoirs, Portraits and Essays*, London: Faber & Faber, 1978*,* p. 36.
[13] Cooper, *Bernard Leach*, p. 35. See also Leach, *Potter's Book,* p. xvii, Moeran, p.140 and Kikuchi, p.14.
[14] Cooper, *Bernard Leach*, p. 35.

In 1910 he met Sōetsu Yanagi (1889 – 1961), the self-styled creator of the Japanese art theory known as *mingei.*[15] *Mingei* became an influential theory within Japanese intellectual and art circles during the late 1920s and 1930s.[16] Yanagi's theory '… presented his absolute "criterion of beauty" (*bi no hyōjun*), and highlight[ed] the supreme beauty of hand-made folkcrafts for ordinary use made by unknown craftsmen.'[17] Yanagi later adapted the theory to fit his interest in Buddhist aesthetics and by this means it gained a spiritual and religious quality.[18] Yanagi, a young, urbane intellectual may have conceptualised the Oriental peasant craftsman in the same way that Leach did – an exotic 'other' to be studied. However, his lack of knowledge coloured his own understanding about how the peasants truly lived their lives.[19] Yanagi's research into peasant crafts began, not in Japan, but in Korea where he built a folk-arts gallery to preserve the work he collected.[20] While he condemned the Japanese government for its colonial policies in Korea he was not above dispensing paternalist advice to the Koreans. His understanding of the Koreans may have been shaped by the way Europeans understood Japan: '[Yanagi's approach] … has parallels with Lafcadio Hearn and Bernard Leach, whom he idealised as sympathisers with Japan.'[21] Certainly Yanagi struggled with the introduction of Western concepts into Japanese culture and how they would fit with the increasing interest in cultural nationalism amongst Japanese intellectuals.[22] *Mingei* appears to be, in part, a means of defining Japanese nationalism in a rapidly changing society: '… the appropriation of modern western ideas in the interests of a national agenda.'[23]

[15] An abbreviation of *Minshūteki Kōgei* (folk crafts), coined in 1925. See Karen Livingstone and Linda Parry (eds), *International Arts and Crafts,* London: V&A Publications, 2005, p. 298.
[16] Moeran, p. 140.
[17] Kikuchi, p. xv.
[18] Ibid.
[19] De Waal, 'Homo Orientalis', p. 361.
[20] Kikuchi, p. 138.
[21] Sōetsu Yanagi, *Yanagi Sōetsu Zenshū* (Collected Works of Sōetsu Yanagi), 22 vols, Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, quoted in Kikuchi, p. 139.
[22] Kikuchi, p. 80.
[23] Livingstone and Parry, p. 311.

One aspect of *Mingei* was the belief that through the suppression of ego, forced on peasant craftsmen by poverty and repetition, the craftsmen were able to produce objects of great beauty.[24] Leach defined it as '… beauty accompanied by the nobleness of poverty.'[25] Certainly neither Yanagi nor Leach was encumbered by the handicaps that weighed down the unknown craftsmen whom they championed. Yanagi and Leach '… were not mingei; they were wealthy, well-connected, art-school-educated, famous artist/philosophers.'[26] Yanagi's qualifications, according to Leach, were based on his intuitive insight: '…[Yanagi] pocessed [sic] the extraordinary "seeing eye" of the best masters of [the] Tea [ceremony].'[27] Leach was not technically-skilled and the work he did produce in Japan 'was confined to making decorative pieces for an urbane Westernised audience.'[28] Yanagi excused this lack of skill by suggesting that where Leach exhibited, 'these … technical deficiencies were subordinated to … his "naïve power".'[29] Above all, however, Leach was a natural publicist and while in Japan he 'shamelessly exploited his status as a foreign artist.'[30]

Leach and Yanagi maintained a close friendship for fifty years and their presentation of Yanagi's ideas was symbiotic.[31] 'Leach was anointed by Yanagi, Yanagi was anointed by Leach. The rhetoric was hyperbolic and overheated: both these friends saw each other as the conduit of spiritual truths, as seers.'[32] However, Leach's incomplete understanding of Japanese culture and Yanagi's tight hold on his claim of originality to the *Mingei* theory bring into question the authenticity of the presentation of the theory to Western audiences. Leach admitted that he had experienced difficulty translating Yanagi's work,[33] and it is

[24] Leach, *Potter's Book*, p. 9.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Britt, 'The "Unknown Craftsman" is Dead'.
[27] Sōetsu Yanagi, adapted by Bernard Leach, *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty*, 2nd ed., Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1981, p. 91.
[28] Edmund De Waal, *20th Century Ceramics,* London: Thames & Hudson, 2003, p. 90.
[29] Ibid., p. 90.
[30] Cooper, *Bernard Leach*, p. 123.
[31] Yanagi, *Unknown Craftsman,* p. 10.
[32] De Waal, 'Homo Orientalis', p. 355.
[33] Yanagi, *Unknown Craftsman*, p. 8. After two translations Leach was, '…to discover … that the script was too much my interpretation of Yanagi to be called a translation.' See also p. 87, 'I, who am unable to read his [Yanagi's] original texts, have attempted to translate with

clear that as the conduit of Yanagi's ideas Leach both attempted to control the way that Japanese pottery was understood in the West and increase his own prestige in Japan.

Leach's writings and lectures became the dominant discourse on studio pottery in Britain. By linking his own writing to Yanagi's philosophy of beauty he could dominate any discussion on aesthetics by using his exclusive knowledge of the mysteries and superiority of Oriental ceramics. This orthodoxy was reinforced by the early writers on the subject: 'As is well known, in general terms the East stands for the importance of the inner life over the external, psychological insight over material forms, the inspiration and generative forces of the artist over technical triumphs of execution.'[34] A later writer would attempt to characterize the difference between Oriental and Western pottery:

> … I realized that Japanese pottery … cannot be thought of as art in the usual sense of that word, i.e., symbol-laden objects created by strongly individualistic, master technicians – objects that tend to find a final home in the display cases of the museum. Nor can this pottery be thought of as mere utensils evolved solely to fulfill mundane functions and limited to that status.[35]

Leach became the unchallenged authority on the subject in the West because Westerners had a confused understanding of Japanese pottery.

Leach returned to Britain in 1920 to set up a pottery in St Ives, accompanied by Shōji Hamada, a potter and ceramic chemist he had met in 1918. Britain at the time was a nation, 'critically receptive to Orientalism. Enthusiasm for Chinese antiquities was at an unprecedented level and, in the art world, this was directly connected to an emergent British Modernism and its interest in the "primitive".'[36] Hamada represented many aspects of the Oriental approach to pottery that

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the help of able and understanding Japanese assistants, so that readers in the Western world may penetrate that which Buddhism contains for the seeker looking for the meaning of beauty in the face of truth.'

[34] George Wingfield Digby, *The Work of the Modern Potter in England,* London: John Murray, 1952, pp. 25-6.

[35] Daniel Rhodes, *Tamba Pottery: The Timeless Art of a Japanese Village*, Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1974, p. 16.

[36] Timothy Wilcox, (ed.), *Shoji Hamada: Master Potter,* London: Lund Humphries, 1998, p. 16.

Leach would later proselytize through his lectures and books. Hamada was technically proficient and had a strong Buddhist sense of aesthetics.[37] His exhibitions in Britain in the 1920s and 30s also offered, 'an "authentic" neo-Orientalism which helped give weight to Leach's own work.'[38] But in some aspects even Hamada could not represent the ideal that Leach and Yanagi had set for potters. Hamada struggled with ambitions to become a progressive artist that appeared to contradict his role as the model for the *mingei* movement. When he became famous, his work remained true to the *mingei* aesthetic theory, but he accepted the accolades and rewards of a great artist that were alien to Yanagi's ideas about anonymity and poverty. When questioned about the high prices his work sold for, Hamada said: 'My largest bowl is two thousand dollars [US$], not so expensive for Japan.'[39]

Leach had not abandoned the ideas that Morris and other Arts and Crafts leaders had inspired in him before he left Britain. Of particular interest was the communal craft village concept - craftsmen working together and selling a range of items made by hand.[40] However, Leach hoped to use his new authority as the expert on Japanese rural craftsmen to add an Oriental flavour to the idea. Leach planned to set up 'a semi-Oriental type of pottery'[41] in Britain. The opportunity came in 1920 with assistance from a wealthy philanthropist, Frances Horne, who provided a loan and a guaranteed income for three years.[42] Leach also wanted his pottery to become 'a metaphor for dreams of an East / West synthesis' and 'a practical demonstration of how the East could … "exercise a wonderful influence upon the soulless mechanical output of Europe".'[43]

To achieve financial stability and free himself from the drudgery of throwing pots everyday, Leach knew he had to employ skilled potters to produce a range of

[37] Susan Peterson, *Shoji Hamada: A Potter's Way and Work,* Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1974, p.12. See also Wilcox, p. 17.
[38] Harrod, *Crafts in Britain*, p. 35.
[39] Ibid., p. 55.
[40] Cooper, *Bernard Leach*, p. 76.
[41] Ibid., p. 132.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Quoted in Harrod, *Crafts in Britain*, p. 35.

practical utilitarian pottery that could compete in price and quality with factory-made items. He justified his decision by claiming, 'that studio pottery was being consumed and understood in the wrong way by the wrong people'[44] - in other words 'ordinary people' were not purchasing it. To place St Ives Pottery on a sustainable financial foundation he employed a number of skilled throwers to achieve this aim. Amongst them was Harry Davis, 'a fiercely idealistic autodidact,' who began working at St Ives in 1933.[45] Davis became recognized internationally for his extraordinary throwing skills and he was to have a major influence on pottery in New Zealand. His future wife, May Scott joined the pottery as a student in 1936. From a wealthy family, she was an example of the interest the upper middle-classes were showing in the studio pottery movement.[46] The relationship between Davis and Leach was fraught with difficulties, partly because of personal differences[47] and partly because, in many ways, they were philosophically some distance apart. To some extent the divisions that developed between the two men demonstrated the weaknesses in the theories of both. Leach's opposition to machinery, on the surface, appeared to be based on spiritual and aesthetic grounds,[48] but May Davis, as May Scott became after marrying Davis, believed that it was simple ignorance.[49] Harry and May Davis appeared to have an ambivalent attitude to the use of machinery:

> Harry and I believed that in the interests of economics, if nothing else, mechanical aids should be used anywhere where they did not affect either the aesthetics of the end product, or degrade the life of the worker. Machines are like that. At first they reduce the monotony and enhance the life but in the end, if used indiscriminately, they increase the monotony and impoverish the life of both maker and user.[50]

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[44] Tanya Harrod, '"The Breath of Reality": Michael Cardew and the Development of Studio Pottery in the 1930s and 1940s', *Journal of Design History,* 2:2&3 (1989), p. 145.
[45] Harrod, *Crafts in Britain,* pp. 37 – 38.
[46] Ibid, p. 38. See also May Davis, *May,* Nelson: M. Davis, 1990, p. 18.
[47] Stephen Carter, interviewed by Dr. Damian H. Skinner, 2 November 2003.
[48] Leach's attitude may have been informed by the Victorian preference for hand-made items that were considered superior to machine-made. See Raphael Samuel, "Workshop of the World: Steam Power and Hand Technology in mid-Victorian Britain,' *History Workshop*, Vol 3, Spring 1977, p. 56.
[49] May Davis, p. 21.
[50] Ibid.

Another area of conflict was the pricing and status of pottery. We have seen that while Leach and Hamada appeared to support the Yanagi ideal of art made by the people for the people - which implied that pottery should be priced so that it could be purchased by anyone. However, their work became so expensive that eventually it could only be purchased by collectors for display and investment. Leach was horrified when a woman who had purchased a teapot from the standard range of domestic ware made at St Ives Pottery complained that it dribbled. His horror was not that it dribbled, but that she had used it to make tea.[51] Harry Davis was critical of this hypocrisy:

> In my lifetime potters of the revivalist handcraft movement conceived the idea of jumping on the "fine art" bandwagon. … It meant a change of social status and, above all, a big change in the attitude to pricing. … the potters had to ingratiate themselves with an upper class and affluent elite, thus pricing their pots well beyond the reach of the common people.[52]

The Davises emigrated to New Zealand in 1962. When his work was available through his own showroom in Nelson,[53] Davis appeared to be caught between his beliefs and his growing fame. As his daughter, Gwenny Davis, later explained:

> There would be people who would come in here … the blue rinse brigade he called them, and they would say oh it's wonderful, I won't use it and he'd feel sick at the thought that they had just missed the whole point. These pots were cheap. It was supposed to be possible to buy yourself a dinner set for a normal family and use it to eat off and that was the whole point.[54]

Davis's reaction appears to be genuine, but it may have been an expression of anguish based on a conflict of ideals that Leach had come to terms with in a different way. Whereas Leach had built up a large workshop that provided him with an income while he toured the world, the Davises' kept their workforce small and therefore needed to undertake much of the routine work themselves with minimal assistance. The different approaches that potters took to the

[51] Quoted in Britt.
[52] Harry Davis, *The Potter's Alternative*, North Ryde, NSW: Methuen, 1987, p. xiii.
[53] Harry and May Davis emigrated to Nelson in August 1962.
[54] Gwenny Davis, interviewed by Dr. Damian H. Skinner, 2 November 2003.

division of labour will be discussed in Chapter Three but Leach was convinced that the Davises' approach would result in higher prices.[55] Indeed the opposite was true but it created financial problems: 'He [Harry] was very against materialistic attitudes. He was so didactic about people who were materialistic.'[56] It was an issue that appears to have been a personal struggle for him for most of his life. Referring to the purchase of a house in Nelson his daughter stated: ' … I dare say that May's mother was again involved in bridging finance.'[57] Nevertheless, with four young children, the couple had to be pragmatic. Stephen Carter, the Davises' apprentice at the time they emigrated to Nelson, recalled: 'I can remember when we first came to New Zealand, one of the first things they had to do, they said, was to double the price of the pottery.'[58]

After Harry's death in 1986, May approached the problem of pricing in an even more pragmatic manner. May Davis disposed of the last pots made by the couple by contracting the New Zealand Society of Potters' President to negotiate sales with museums around New Zealand. In 1989, for example, the Dowse Art Museum in Lower Hutt paid $140 for a 'casserole bowl'.[59] Most items of this nature, made by other potters in New Zealand at the time were selling for less than one quarter of the price.[60] During his lifetime Davis did endeavour to maintain his strong belief that pottery should be available at a fair price. However, the standards that Leach had set for potters internationally, and which Leach himself failed to live up to, became a point of conflict for all potters. Leach deleted Davis's name from later editions of *A Potter's Book,*[61] perhaps

[55] Leach, *Potter's Book*, p. 257.
[56] Gwenny Davis, interview.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Stephen Carter, interview. Gwenny Davis linked the price rise to the price of Crown Lynn Pottery. 'Clay, Celebrating the Creative History of Potters and Pottery in Nelson', Nelson Provincial Museum, Opening speech, 26 May 2007. The relationship between Crown Lynn and studio pottery is discussed further in Chapter Three.
[59] Bob Maysmor, letter to Rick Rudd, 29 June 1989, MS Papers 4710-5, Ref. No: 93-031-2/02, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.
[60] Michael Rogers, email to author, 13 August 2006.
[61] Carter interview.

because the pupil had tried to stay true to the ideals for which the master himself had showed so little regard.

The twin guidelines for potters – functionality and price - became a simplistic direction to how potters could remain true to the Oriental roots of the movement that began with Leach and Yanagi in Japan. To some extent, however, they were a Western interpretation of a Japanese philosophy most potters only had a tenuous understanding of. They became metaphors for an idea. In Nelson, Justin Gardner, a potter who had emigrated from South Africa, admired Harry and May Davis' standards and ideals, describing Harry as, 'the greatest potter in the Western World.'[62] Gardner stated that potters would always make a living, 'as long as we make good quality domestic ware and don't overprice'.[63] Furthermore, he claimed that there was '… no trend in Nelson to sell high artistic pottery that's non-functional', and, 'large pots do sell well as long as they have a purpose.'[64] Debate about pricing continued throughout the period that this thesis examines. Some saw high prices as a recognition of pottery as an 'art form' while others considered them a type of elitism out of keeping with the unknown craftsman concept. The cartoon below (figure I) speaks of the relationship between overseas influences and the beginnings of a national assertiveness in terms of price.

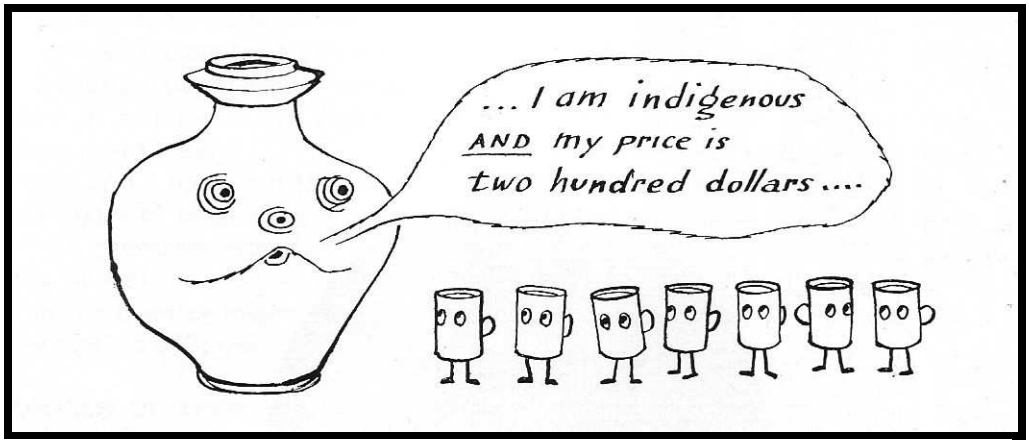

Figure I. *New Zealand Potter* (NZP), 12:2, 1970, p. 17.

[62] Justin Gardner, interviewed by Karen Patterson, 19 November 1984.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

Leach's domination of the studio pottery movement came about, in large part, through the authorship of *A Potter's Book*.[65] Although planning for the book had started in 1920, it was only published in 1940 after four years of writing and occasionally acrimonious debate between Leach and his advisors. Henry Bergen, one of these advisors, is quoted as saying that: '… the text was "too rhetorical and excited" as well as badly written,' and further that Leach had confused the "humanistic and intuitive work done in a traditional manner … ", and "the rational and abstract … work done by a designer … carried out by machine …" adding, "each has its own virtue.".'[66] The chapter that raised the book above a simple 'how to' pottery book was titled 'Towards a Standard'. It demonstrated that Leach had accepted that Yanagi's unknown craftsman philosophy was not easily translated into Western thinking: 'The Potter is no longer a peasant or journeyman as in the past, nor can he be any longer described as an industrial worker: he is by force of circumstances an artist-craftsman, …'.[67] It is clear, however, that he had had to change his views on a number of issues to adapt the book so that it would appeal to the British public who had been raised on mass-produced ceramics – often of high quality. Bergen had earlier advised Leach '… not to confuse his nostalgia for "the little workshop in China and Korea and Japan" with the reality of the virtues of mass-produced tableware, which was "much more practicable in use than any peasant ware".'[68]

Regardless of the reaction of his critics, a reading public that had suffered considerable material deprivation and restrictions to freedom seized the book with great enthusiasm, particularly after the Second World War. While the book

[65] Considered by many potters to be the 'Bible' of studio pottery. See also Yanagi, *The Unknown Craftsman*, p. 10, where Hamada refers to Leach's book as 'a potter's Bible', and Kikuchi, pp. 198, 233. The 'bible' theme continued into research: see Heather Stirling, 'A History of the Development of the New Zealand Studio Potters Movement as Reflected in the New Zealand Potter Magazine', Special Study, Brighton Polytechnic, 1979, p. 16.
[66] Cooper, *Bernard Leach*, p. 210.
[67] Leach, *Potter's Book,* p. 1.
[68] Cooper, *Bernard Leach*, p. 210.

promoted Oriental aesthetics it also spoke to potential craftsmen and women about the rural world that many yearned for. As one British-born potter recalled:

> Of course we all read the bible – the *Potters Book* - and I thought this is where I'd like to live. The idea of living in the country. It was after the war – we were all looking for new directions. The old idea of life had been destroyed. The stable kind of life where you could pursue things and do things and a society that was structured. At the same time we were looking for roots again. It was almost contradictory.[69]

Some who became interested in the relationship between pottery and the rural lifestyle were young, middle class intellectuals such as the English potter Michael Cardew. Cardew dropped out of Oxford University and learned to throw pots at a traditional country pottery at Braunton.[70] He worked at St Ives between 1923 and 1926, and then revived a pottery at Winchcombe.[71] Cardew, like many others of his age and class, initially had an intense dislike of industrialization. Ironically, given Britain's role in the industrial revolution, they saw industry as anti-English. 'An "English way of life" was defined and widely accepted; it stressed nonindustrial noninnovative and nonmaterial qualities, best encapsulated in rustic imagery – "England is the country," ….'[72] Eventually, however, he came to terms with mass-production: 'it seems obvious that artist potters should make prototypes for mass-production. … Nobody today can afford to quarrel with mass-production; it is a fact of history.'[73] Cardew's change came about as a result of his reading of Marx: '…his [Cardew's] life as country potter seem[ed] inadequate and he became determined to contribute to the pottery industry.'[74] The association between pottery and the countryside continued, however, and became part of the tradition of the studio pottery movement in Nelson, which will be examined in more detail in Chapter Two.

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[69] Jack Laird, interviewed by Dr. Damian H. Skinner, 25 November 2000.
[70] Cooper, *Bernard Leach*, p. 152.
[71] Harrod, 'Breath of Reality', p. 145.
[72] Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850 – 1980,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 6.
[73] Michael Cardew, *Pioneer Pottery*, London: Longman, 1969, p. 239.
[74] Harrod, 'Breath of Reality', p. 147.

In Nelson, by the 1960s, the different strands of the studio pottery movement that had developed in Britain could be identified within the local pottery community. Mirek Smišek became the first person to establish a professional pottery in Nelson when he combined teaching pottery and producing his own work in 1956. It is difficult to gauge his understanding of the *mingei* philosophy at that date as he recorded all his spoken and written thoughts after he had worked in Japan for six months in 1961 and, following that, for a year at St Ives Pottery.[75] As Barry Brickell reported, Smišek was aware of Leach's limitations but admired his ability to inspire:

> Leach does not claim to be a potter of great skill. He is an inspirator [sic], one with insight towards aesthetics, sickened by the state of his own country's condition in terms of handcraft professions in the face of industrial rage. … We were suffering from the drastic and sweeping changes of the craftsman's status due to the Industrial Revolution, and only now can some of us manage to crawl out from under the burden of this and the residual pillars of Victorianism. "Don't worship Leach or stand in awe of him or his personality; this is irrelevant", says Mirek. "Understand what he has done."[76]

Smišek's admiration continued to grow. In an interview in 1984 he described Leach as 'a great teacher / philosopher' and 'a humble man' but there are no suggestions that potters should copy the anonymous Oriental potters of the past.[77] He also admired Hamada but was aware that it was impossible to emulate the Japanese approach to pottery except in the way pottery added 'depth to our lives'.[78] It is evident that Smišek was attempting to come to terms with the dichotomy that existed within the Anglo-Oriental tradition that formed the foundation of his training. He admired the unknown craftsmen of the past but as his skill as a potter gained more and more public recognition the conflict between Eastern notions of anonymity and Western ideas about individual fame became difficult to reconcile.

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[75] Dianne and Peter Beatson *The Crane and the Kotuku: Artistic Bridges between New Zealand and Japan*, Palmerston North: Manawatu Art Gallery, 1994, p. 20.
[76] Barry Brickell, "Smisek Returns", NZP, 7:1, August, p. 3. An examination of a number of interviews and articles by Smišek and Brickell suggests that this article may have reflected many of Brickell's thoughts on industrialization.
[77] Mirek Smišek, interviewed by Karen Patterson, 2 September 1984.
[78] Ibid.

Discussion about this dichotomy was given a more national focus in the *New Zealand Potter* (NZP) magazine, which was first published in 1958. The bi-annual magazine grew out of the annual National Potters' Exhibition.[79] E. A Plishke,[80] a modernist architect and supporter of the studio pottery movement, discussed the relationship between past traditions and new ideas: 'This going back to previous periods not only gives strength and encouragement to the artist but also has an inherent weakness – the weakness of any kind of eclecticism, any acceptance of the forms of other periods for today's artistic expression.'[81] For Smišek, and no doubt his buying public, the technical quality was too important to be, 'subordinated to … his [Leach's] "naïve power".'[82] Doreen Blumhardt, an educator and potter who had recently been to Japan, warned however: 'Technical perfection as an aim will inevitability lead to artistic sterility …'.[83]

Outside the potting community there was a growing disquiet at the level of copying of Japanese pottery. In 1961 Charles Fearnley, another architect, wrote in the NZP that the slavish copying of Japanese forms, decoration and glazing made him 'wonder if the rugged individualism and general inventiveness of the Kiwi are indeed a myth.' He continued, ' … fortunately nobody has started a self-conscious search for a New Zealand style of pottery, something should evolve that is of New Zealand, and this cannot happen while we worship at the shrine of the sake bottle and the tea bowl.'[84] In Nelson potters with excellent technical skills were trying to connect their often high level of skill to a foreign philosophy that, according to Leach and Yanagi, often dismissed such technicalities as a distraction from the real purpose of the craft.

The signing of work, perhaps more than any other aspect of pottery making, emphasized the conflict that existed between the Eastern and Western, ancient

[79] Stirling, p. 20.
[80] Linda Tyler, 'Plischke, Ernst Anton 1903 - 1992'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 22 June 2007, URL: http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/
[81] E. A Plishke, NZP, 1:1, 1958, p. 7.
[82] De Waal, *20th Century Ceramics,* p. 90.
[83] Doreen Blumhardt, NZP, 5:2, 1962, p. 45.
[84] Charles Fearnley, NZP, 4:2, 1961, pp. 54 – 5.

and modern traditions in ceramics. Leach, and the overseas potters who came to Nelson, dealt with the issue of signed work in a number of different ways. Leach managed to present a justification for the individual signing of pottery at St Ives: 'We can afford to abandon the overstress on the soloist, but we cannot pretend to do without leaders and one corollary is that design should be paid for reasonably and not copied.'[85] By signing his work, or even the work of other potters at St Ives, Leach was not so much guaranteeing the authenticity of the work in individual terms as providing design leadership. He continued:

> I am not content with Yanagi's, Hamada's and [Kanjiro] Kawai's principle of not signing pots, … design and leadership today are dependent upon individual perception and not upon broken or breaking tradition. The designer is also "worthy of his hire" and not signing his work, although a significant symbol of protest against over-egotism, is not the complete answer.[86]

Harry and May Davis admired the Oriental humility that Leach and Yanagi had promoted but not practised. While they struggled with pricing and materialism, they remained determined to retain the integrity that they associated with the anonymity of the maker. They never signed as individuals work that they had created at Crewenna Pottery. May Davis explained: 'I had a call from Sydney … once, from someone wanting a "Harry Davis" pot. There were no such things.'[87] May, who had firm feminists views, found the assigning of individual names to the work being produced at Crewenna particularly annoying as it placed her in a secondary role as a potter. In 1975 she explained in a letter to the New Zealand Friends Service Committee [Quakers], who were supporting an aid project the Davises were operating in Peru[88] that Harry's name was constantly being used in place of both their names. She explained: '… (as a man you couldn't realize it) [but] its [sic] <u>always</u> happening! My pots are labeled, not Crewenna, but

[85] Bernard Leach, *A Potter in Japan 1952 – 1954*, London: Faber and Faber, 1960, p. 178.
[86] Ibid., pp. 178-9.
[87] May Davis, p. 143.
[88] Between 1970 and 1979 Harry and May Davis built and operated a pottery in Peru. The pottery was designed to use local materials to develop an industry based on self-sufficiency. See May Davis, pp. 153 – 213 and NZP, 15:1, 1973, p. 9.

"Harry Davis".'[89] The acknowledgement of Harry before May extended to their presentations as well. In the letter she continued:

> We gave a joint talk in Nelson. We spoke for the same amount of time, and it was so successful … but the next week I met someone who said "I was so sorry I missed your husband's talk, I heard it was the best lecture ever given in that hall!" … I feel I have to stand up for myself as a women. Specially since it is Int. W. Year! [International Women's Year].[90]

May's irritation suggests that she recognised that women would only ever achieve secondary status in the West if the anonymity associated with Japanese pottery was fully subscribed to in New Zealand.

This concern to retain some anonymity, however, was also based on Harry's almost obsessive distrust of the fine arts. Harry set down his thoughts on the historical relationship between art and craft in the form of lecture notes that he used when fundraising for their humanitarian work in Peru. In the notes, he reviewed the development of the artist as an individual from the time of the Renaissance. He began with the obvious: 'Clearly one can have craftsmanship without what we call Art, but one cannot have art without craftsmanship.'[91] He developed his argument by saying that art slipped back and forth across a zone that exists between the purely manual and the purely imaginative – a zone that he claimed did not exist before the fifteenth century – 'their languages had no such word [artist].'[92] He related the changing discourse about the status of the two branches to the growth of a new wealthy class: 'It is very important to grasp that at the very point in history when fine art, … was being used as a status symbol by the new class of wealthy bankers and merchants … those who followed the other arts, i.e. the craftsmen or artigani, were losing their freedom and dignity in the interests of commerce.'[93]

[89] May Davis to New Zealand Friends Service Committee, MS-Group-0203, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL).
[90] Ibid.
[91] Harry Davis, *The Potter's Alternative*, North Ryde, NSW: Methuen, 1987, p.2.
[92] Ibid., p. 3.
[93] Ibid., p. 18.

The modern day comparison to Davis's interpretation of history was that the industrialization that had created wealth in the West had caused major poverty in developing economies. Their wish to have all work produced at Crewenna identified as belonging to the pottery and not the individual was related to Yanagi's and Leach's ideas on communal workshops, but had a more solid foundation in their own hopes for the revival of traditional craft techniques as a means of helping those in the third world lift themselves out of poverty. The Davises' ideas on the responsibility of craftsmen and women in the modern world were therefore quite different to those of Yanagi and Leach. Whereas Yanagi and Leach were predominantly concerned with improving aesthetic standards, the Davises believed that they had a social responsibility to share the communal workshop concept, and in doing so may have advanced other theoretical notions Yanagi and Leach had expounded, in more practical ways.

The Davises had a strong sense that industrialization was detrimental to the environment and in the pursuit of knowledge related to their concerns, they encountered the writings of E. F. Schumacher.[94] Schumacher was considered a brilliant but orthodox economist who, at the age of forty-five, had an epiphany that convinced him that the industrialized world was heading in the wrong direction - particularly in the way it used energy.[95] Schumacher stated: 'Small-scale operations, no matter how numerous, are always less likely to be harmful to the natural environment than large-scale ones, simply because their individual force is small in relation to the recuperative forces of nature.'[96] This notion of small scale, low impact industry appealed to Harry and May Davis. Schumacher also wrote about work in a way that would recall for them the Buddhist concepts that Yanagi appended to the *Mingei* movement: '… the function of work… [is] … threefold: to give a man a chance to utilize and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his ego-centredness by joining

[94] E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, London: Blond Briggs, 1973.
[95] *Small is Beautiful*, National Film Board of Canada, c1978, Massey University Library Audiovisual Collection. See also Geoffrey Kirk, (ed.), *Schumacher on Energy: Speeches and Writings of E. F. Schumacher,* London: Jonathan Cape, 1982, pp. xi - xvii.
[96] Schumacher, p. 31.

with other people in a common task; and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence.'[97]

Other potters arrived in the country with other concerns and priorities, but often based on a blending of the orthodoxies that Yanagi and Leach had established for the movement. Jack Laird came from a British middle-class art school background and arrived in New Zealand in 1959 to take up a position as the Department of Education Adult Education Tutor in Arts and Crafts for the Wellington region.[98] He and his wife Peggy had experience in producing handmade domestic pottery for the London market.[99] Jack Laird did not take long to express his concerns about the state of the studio pottery movement in New Zealand and to introduce his version of the Yanagi / Leach tradition. In a critique of the Third New Zealand Potters' exhibition soon after he arrived Laird wrote:

> One is struck by the preponderate influence of Bernard Leach in the work displayed. So much so that the derivative nature of the form speaks of overmuch dependence. It is here, sadly enough, that the colonial spirit of self-reliance is weakest and thinnest. … Leach's great contribution to pottery is his comprehensive philosophy of the craft. In essence Oriental and humble … but his [Leach's] work was never English. … the best of English craft pottery is epitomized by Cardew's work at Winchcombe. Leach gathered round him a number of very able potters who learnt from him Oriental stoneware forms and techniques, and they in turn produced several generations of students. At each remove the influence weakened, and the spirit became more flaccid until the inevitable reaction set in, and today there is a very different appearance to the English pottery scene. It is essential for New Zealand potters to avoid this state and to become aware that any art must be of its own time and space.[100]

In Laird's opinion, while British pottery had moved on since the mid-war years, New Zealand's had not developed beyond the stage of imitation.

[97] Ibid., p. 49.
[98] NZP, 2:1, 1959, p. 9.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Jack Laird, NZP, 2:2, 1959, p. 35.

For Laird, Leach was just 'a starting point',[101] and the Japanese tradition in New Zealand was largely irrelevant. Laird was reluctant to acknowledge a debt to the Leach tradition that many of its adherents felt was due and he increasingly became disillusioned with British pottery: 'His [Leach's] philosophy, and his whole background, was from Japan. There was no corresponding cultural pattern that supported the Japanese methods here. They [British potters] were turning out … rather pathetic imitations.'[102]

The admiration that Laird held for Leach waned earlier than for many other potters in New Zealand. When Leach and Cardew visited New Zealand in 1962 and 1967 respectively, Laird was appalled at the skill level of the two men. Cardew was 'painful to watch. I realized that these two couldn't throw. I was watching one [Cardew] of the worst two throwers in English pottery – and the other one was Leach.'[103] Non-potters also found Leach's preaching difficult to handle. Gordon Tovey, an art educator (see chapter two), attended a Unesco seminar in Tokyo in 1954. In a letter home he wrote '…Bernard Leach [the famous potter] came to stay for the rest of the seminar. He is proving most difficult. Over 70 years and full of the conceit of a well controlled life, reliving his past.'[104]

The visit by Leach was, however, for many potters in New Zealand, on a parallel with a visit by royalty.[105] An editorial in the *New Zealand Potter* gushed: 'The depth of his influence could be gauged by the trepidation from which nearly every potter seemed to suffer at the prospect of meeting the great man during his recent visit to our country.'[106] Later the editor added: 'It was … surprising to many of us to find Bernard Leach such an English gentleman, who reminded us irresistibly of English relatives who have played so large a part in the formative

[101] Margie Pope, 'Jack Laird', Museum Studies Special Topic 67.381, Massey University, 1998, p. 5.
[102] Laird interview, 1998.
[103] Ibid. See also, Laird, interviewed by Skinner, 2000. It should be noted that Leach was seventy-five and Cardew sixty-six at the time of their visits.
[104] Quoted in Carol Henderson, *A Blaze of Colour. Gordon Tovey. Artist Educator,* Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1998, p. 146.
[105] See figure II.
[106] Helen Mason, 'Editorial', NZP, 5:1, 1962, p. 2.

stages of New Zealand.'[107] Leach's revered status within New Zealand's fledgling pottery movement is graphically shown in figure II.

Figure II. Bernard Leach at Coromandel with Jane Buckley and Barry Brickell. (Photo taken January 1962 by Graeme Storm). Brickell (far left) became a major figure in the New Zealand pottery movement. NZP, 5:1, 1962, p. 2.

The local pottery establishment treated tours of New Zealand by Leach in 1962, Hamada in 1965 and Cardew in 1967, as occasions of great importance. The Mayor of Auckland held a civic reception for Leach and he met the Japanese ambassador and the British High Commissioner, amongst many other dignitaries.[108] Laird's concerns about Leach's authority, and Leach's surprise at the strength of studio pottery in New Zealand, [109] represented part of a pivotal moment for the movement. Leach's comment that New Zealand pottery was 'the strongest movement outside England, even if it has not got, as yet, a definite character of its own' shows the level of paternalism that visiting 'notables' of the

[107] Ibid., p. 3.
[108] Cooper, *Bernard Leach,* pp. 306-7.
[109] Mason in NZP, 5:1, 1962, p. 3 and Cooper, *Bernard Leach,* p. 307.

pottery world were prepared to offer, and New Zealand potters quietly accepted.[110] Leach went on to advise on the best path for New Zealand potters:

> New Zealand potters are geographically remote but they are predominantly of British stock …. Blood … is thicker than water, and the natural process, … is for the New Zealander to make a foundation of his cultural inheritance and to broaden out from it to include whatever he can absorb or digest from his new situation. [111]

Figure III. The reception committee that greeted Hamada at Christchurch in 1965. Yvonne Rust (far right) became a nationally recognised potter and teacher. NZP, 8:1, 1965, p. 27.

Leach was continuing to frame his authority in the exclusive terms that demanded that the Anglo-Japanese tradition that he had established be adhered to – but with a little New Zealand culture added – if it could be found.

Shōji Hamada's visit in 1965 was also treated with great reverence.[112] He was given a reception that reflected New Zealanders' understanding of the Japanese notion of the "living treasure" – see figure III. The Christchurch *Press* reported that when he spoke at the opening of an exhibition of his work at the Canterbury Museum, 'potters … had gathered from throughout the country to welcome their "Master"'.[113] Hamada was gracious in his praise of New Zealand pottery, but like

[110] Leach in NZP, 5:1, 1962, p. 6.
[111] Ibid.
[112] See figure III. The reception committee for Hamada at Christchurch in 1965.
[113] *Press* (Christchurch), 25 February 1965, p. 14.

Leach he felt the need to control the type of pottery that dominated New Zealand. In his speech at the Canterbury opening he stated: 'Everywhere else one finds much abstract work, but not here [New Zealand]. The fashion for abstract pottery has passed its peak, and I think New Zealand potters are very wise to keep to orthodox styles.'[114] New Zealand potters could take comfort that while their work was still in its infancy, and may well be derivative, it did sit within the confines of the accepted orthodoxy.

Even potters from Britain who were not considered to be in the top echelon had an opinion on New Zealand's place in the world of ceramics. Stephen Carter felt that 'In the 60s pottery in New Zealand, to be blunt, was pretty crude.'[115] New Zealand potters reinforced the Leach / Hamada orthodoxy by admitting to a sense of inferiority: As Doreen Blumhardt commented, 'I didn't feel I had achieved a great deal until Leach came.'[116]

The difficulty for potters in New Zealand in the 1960s, however, was that, by then, Leach was such a dominant force in the pottery world that to question his authority was tantamount to cultural suicide and those who found his advice shallow had no one to represent their position. In addition, the intertwining of ideas around Leach, Yanagi and Hamada made it difficult for New Zealanders to understand what the philosophical basis of their ideas was:

> …Hamada became a bit of a cult figure in NZ and people sort of homaged Japan to go and look at Hamada and paid a lot for his pots because he was the great potter. He's probably just another normal potter like every other potter but he just happened to get a cult following … You sign your pots, you do publicity presentations, you dress the right way, you make interviews difficult and rare things to be obtained, you charge more for your pots.[117]

The dominance of Leach was reinforced by reports about work experience opportunities at St Ives Pottery. Stephen Carter reported that when he returned to Britain in 1965 he tried to get a job at the Leach Pottery. ' …You virtually had

[114] Ibid.
[115] Carter interview.
[116] Doreen Blumhardt, interviewed by Dr. Damian H. Skinner, 16 February 1999.
[117] Gwenny Davis interview.

to pay to work at the Leach Pottery because it was so renowned in those early 60s. A lot of people worked at the Leach Pottery for the mana, not for any sort of personal income.'[118] The small number of New Zealand potters who did work at St Ives Pottery, made the pilgrimage to Japan or had work accepted for exhibition in Japan, gained from the association with the Leach / Hamada orthodoxy. Reporting on a touring exhibition at the Takashimaya department store on the Ginza in Tokyo, the New Zealand Press Association was able to add at the end of the report that: 'Three potters, Barry Brickell, Len Castle and Helen Mason, have been included to draw attention to the growth of this art in New Zealand.'[119] Fearnley[120] had, in his NZP article, placed the need for overseas travel and learning in a more balanced light: 'Used intelligently, I claim that trips aborad [sic] or study of overseas techniques pinpoints our own weakness, but also shows that where a particularly strong tradition occurs it owes little if anything to imported culture.'[121]

While almost any pottery or advice that came out of St Ives Pottery or from Japan was treated with veneration, as the confidence of the New Zealand movement grew some began to question the standards. Neil Grant, a young potter who would later become Head of the Ceramics Department of Otago Polytechnic, purchased some early St Ives pottery, but later items seen in shops in the mid-1960s disappointed him: 'Later shipments were not as good. Jack Marshall [Leach's senior thrower] made the early stuff.'[122] A realization was growing that potters in New Zealand were as skilled as any overseas and that the Japanese ethos associated with pottery was not appropriate for New Zealand.

Amongst the early potters in Nelson who started learning their craft in the 1950s and went on to earn a living making pottery were Chris du Fresne and Nancy

[118] Carter interview.
[119] *Press*, 24 September 1964, p. 22.
[120] Refer fn. 84.
[121] Fearnley in NZP, 4:2, 1961, p. 56.
[122] Neil Grant, interviewed by Dr. Damian H. Skinner, 17 November 2000.

Barnicoat.[123] While du Fresne originally worked in stoneware he later changed to earthenware to increase the colour range. Barnicoat chose to work in earthenware from the start for reasons of practicality, and to develop her ideas about the New Zealand landscape. Working in earthenware moved them away from the stoneware tradition that was so dominated by Leach's presence. The debate about the relative merits of earthenware versus stoneware flared up on a regular basis and will be discussed further in relation to education in Chapter Two. When John Wood, in the NZP magazine, appeared to be suggesting that potters working in earthenware were trying to emulate stoneware potters – in brighter colours – but were not succeeding,[124] Gordon Baldwin, a tutor at Eton College, angrily responded: 'We owe a great debt … to the East through Bernard Leach's teaching, but just as painters, owing a debt to Cézanne, have moved on, so must potters.'[125] In addition, Chris du Fresne broke another tradition in the studio pottery movement by using the industrial technique of slip casting.[126] du Fresne, one suspects, was aware of the dominance of the Anglo-Oriental tradition that Leach had established, but may have chosen to play down its significance:

> Chris du Fresne is an uncomplicated man not choked up with theory. … He says, "I have often speculated on how indigenous styles of pottery originate. … As a New Zealander born and bred, and with no background of overseas study and largely self-taught, obviously if there is such a thing as environmental influence I am well and truly under it.[127]

Chris du Fresne and Nancy Barnicoat were the first of a new group of potters. This group was New Zealand born and appeared to be largely unaware of the Leach doctrine, or chose not to be influenced by it. In addition, Barnicoat, who started making pottery in 1959, represented the growing trend of women working alone in a male dominated industry.

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[123] Julie Warren, *Clay: The Pottery Industry – 150 Years in Nelson,* Produced by the Nelson Potters Association. pp. 13-14.
[124] NZP, 5:1, 1962, p. 28.
[125] NZP, 6:1, 1963, p. 67.
[126] Chris du Fresne, interviewed by Karen Patterson, November 1984. Slip casting involves pouring liquid clay into a mould to produce exact replicas of the original item.
[127] Margaret Harris, 'Nelson Potters', NZP, 12:2, 1970, pp .4 & 12.

The members of the Nelson pottery clubs that began to flourish in the late 1960s and early 1970s were aware of Leach and the Japanese tradition, but had little knowledge of the philosophical basis of the work.[128] Ngaire Hands was puzzled that the Japanese potters smashed the majority of their work to maintain a standard.[129] For Jan Moresby, the message that Leach was proclaiming was that 'you must be happy with your pottery because it will be around for a long time.'[130] June Reay expressed her interest in Leach's work in simple terms: 'I just liked his pots … because they were earthy and homely … they were real pots.'[131] Mary Harvey and Sadie Sharpin joined a pottery club but did not continue their involvement in the long term. They remembered discussions about Bernard Leach but they were not instructed in the underlying philosophy of the pottery movement.[132] Jane McCallum started learning pottery at a club and later became a professional potter. She discovered that commercial considerations conflicted with the Leach / Hamada ideas: 'People [potters] did try to follow the philosophy but New Zealanders liked things to be a little more structured. People did not want different sized bowls even though they knew they were hand-crafted.'[133] McCallum explained the dichotomy as the Western need for symmetry and regularity.[134] Nina Wilkinson emigrated from England and was introduced to pottery in Britain through *A Potter's Book*.[135] She believed that Leach was more famous in Britain than New Zealand. She knew that he was influenced by Japanese pottery but she did not understand the ideas behind Japanese pottery.[136] Amongst club members there was general awareness that Leach was an important influence but few understood why.

The Leach influence nevertheless permeated the pottery movement in Nelson. Club members may not have had a clear understanding of the philosophy but

[128] The pottery clubs are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.
[129] Ngaire Hands, interviewed by the author 23 November 2006.
[130] Jan Moresby, interviewed by the author 23 November 2006.
[131] June Reay, interviewed by the author 6 December 2006.
[132] Sadie Sharpin in Mary Harvey and Sadie Sharpin interview by the author 1 December 2006.
[133] Jane McCallum, interviewed by the author 22 November 2006.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Nina Wilkinson, interviewed by the author 28 November 2006.
[136] Ibid.

some knew it was concerned with the relationship between hand-made and machine-made. At Craft Potters, the first club in Nelson, a debate circulated around the purchase of a pug mill – a machine to mix and knead clay: 'Some people thought you should be able to work the clay yourself. It was a club after all for learning to work with clay. And a pug mill was just going to take over and make people lazy.'[137] The debate was concerned with how much potters should do for themselves: 'Even the potters that bought clay, and didn't go out and dig it themselves, were called the Betty Crocker potters.'[138] The implication was that the less machinery that was used the more true to Leach's ideas the pottery would be.

The apparent lack of interest or indifference to Leach's unbending criteria was not limited to New Zealand-born potters or to the club members. Christopher Vine set up a pottery in Nelson in 1964, having learned the craft while working as an architect in London and throwing for the Lairds at Waimea Pottery for two years.[139] He soon became bored with the repetitive nature of throwing and wished to introduce more vibrant colours into his work through changing to earthenware: '[My] heart sinks at exhibitions – at all the browns and greys. [They] are very subtle but also boring.'[140]

Vine's interest in pottery ultimately however, was a means to an end. Like the Davises he described his family as 'nuclear refugees' who saw themselves as the 'beginning of an influx of people who felt that things weren't too good in Europe.'[141] Leach's ideas about a community of potters did not appeal to Vine, but he was concerned about how machinery fitted into modern society: 'The paradox [is that] machines do all the drudgery work [but] a lot of people do not have enough work to do.'[142] He was also influenced by the ideas of John Seymour, a British advocate of self-sufficiency: 'I would say to a man who has

[137] McCallum interview.
[138] Ibid.
[139] NZP, 12:2, 1970, pp. 4-5.
[140] Chris Vine, interviewed by Karen Patterson, November 1984
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.

some money but not too much strength: employ modern aids.'[143] In this sense Vine was more akin to the Davises in his outlook, perhaps because they were interested in similar ideas about the sustainability of the environment[144] – an issue that Leach and Yanagi never touched on or were influenced by.

By the early 1970s immigrants from other countries, particularly the United States of America, were arriving in Nelson and establishing potteries, often in conjunction with farming. Many were well-educated intellectuals who were concerned about the way western society was heading. They expressed similar concerns to the potters who had arrived in New Zealand twenty years earlier. Bill and Nancy Malcolm described themselves refugees from 'urban pathology' – the advance of urban society into rural areas. [145] Both were graduates from American universities and Nancy had a Masters of Arts degree in ceramics. The difference between these potters and the 'pioneers' was that by the 1970s hand-made pottery had become an accepted part of new Zealand's culture and kitchens. The New Zealand public's acceptance of hand-made pottery and the number of potters amazed the Malcolms. They were astonished by the cultural acceptance of pottery in New Zealand and the contrast with America: 'Pottery was such a huge part of everyday life. Go into any kitchen and there would be at least some stoneware even though it might not be what people ate off everyday.'[146]

> We couldn't believe that when a young woman was getting married she wanted nothing more than a handcrafted dinner set whereas in the US it would just be unthinkable. You never heard of something like that. She always wanted crystal or silver or if she got ceramics at all it was something like Rosenthal, which was machine perfect. It certainly was not hand crafted and wasn't meant to be.[147]

In America the only people they knew who could make a living from pottery were the 'big' names. Ceramic graduates expected to teach in universities.

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[143] John Seymour, *The Fat of the Land*, London: Faber, 1961, p. 171. Note: Seymour was married to a potter.
[144] Harris, NZP, 12:2, 1970, p. 6.
[145] Bill and Nancy Malcolm, interviewed by the author 12 December 2006.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.

The Malcolms intended to farm in New Zealand but were concerned about the boom and bust nature of farming. They found they could subsidize the farm with raku[148] – a quick fire form of pottery developed in Japan. They were aware that some people were influenced by Leach but they were 'never very fussed, or even very influenced by Bernard Leach.'[149] As the background of the potters in Nelson became more diverse and the confidence of the New Zealand-born potters increased, the rigid guidelines that Leach, Yanagi and Hamada had laid down became diluted. The conflict about standards that this diversity created is examined In Chapter Four.

In 1970 the editor of the NZP described the studio pottery movement in Nelson as 'a microcosm of the New Zealand pottery scene, showing the widely varying backgrounds [of the potters].'[150] She later explained the proliferation as a result of Nelson having: 'The geology, the climate, the kind of "South of France" atmosphere of living closely to the land, …'.[151] The background of the potters helped change the traditions that had originally formed the basis of the movement in Nelson. The combining of old traditions, as defined by Leach, and new ideas as they evolved at potteries such as Waimea helped develop the distinctive character of the region.

[148] Raku pottery is produced by removing pottery from a red-hot kiln and placing it in combustible material. The technique is associated with the Japanese tea ceremony. See Robert Piepenburg, *Raku Pottery*, New York: Macmillian Publishing, 1972.
[149] Malcolm interview.
[150] Harris, NZP, 12:2, 1970, p. 3.
[151] Ibid., p. 4.

Chapter Two

Children's Education and Adult's Play: From School to Clubs and Beyond

The first professional potters in Nelson, although small in number, had a major impact on a general public that was increasingly becoming interested in hand-made pottery. Some of the first potters in Nelson, through a need to supplement their income or a desire to share their interest in pottery, began teaching evening classes or weekend schools. Mirek Smišek, for example, taught pottery at Waimea College in Richmond, Nelson from 1958[1] and later at the Nelson Technical School.[2] Tutors of pottery found a receptive audience for their classes. By the late 1960s and early 1970s large numbers of people had started taking night classes, attending weekend schools and joining pottery clubs in the region.[3] For many of these people the pottery movement was a natural extension of their interest in the arts, which had been fostered by changes to New Zealand's education system that had started several decades earlier. For this group the final aim was not necessarily a lifestyle based on pottery; although some did earn part or all their income from it, but to satisfy a need for creative expression and, in some cases, to achieve a degree of separation from other, more mundane, aspects of their lives. Many other people became collectors of the increasing volume of hand-made pottery that was becoming available.

This chapter considers the use of art-integrated programmes and child-centred learning as an integral part of the New Zealand education system following the election of the first Labour government in 1935, and the appointment of Dr Clarence Beeby as Director of Education in 1940. Many of those who became involved in the studio pottery movement were graduates of the new approach to

[1] Julie Warren, *Clay: The Pottery Industry – 150 Years in Nelson,* Produced by the Nelson Potters Association., p. 11.
[2] Carol Henderson, *A Blaze of Colour. Gordon Tovey. Artist Educator,* Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1998, p. 198 and Colin Bateup, interviewed by Karen Patterson 21 November 1984.
[3] Chappèll correspondence. Also referred to on p. 1 of the Introduction.

education. Their experiences are compared with those who were educated overseas. The role of adult education is examined along with the formation of pottery clubs to determine if social conditions in New Zealand between the 1950s and 1970s encouraged people to join the pottery movement. The chapter will also study the relationship between people who saw a future for themselves as professional potters and those who considered themselves 'hobbyists' to determine if such developments were predetermined or unexpected developments.

The election of the first Labour Government in December 1935 marked the beginning of many changes to the New Zealand education system that one writer would describe within five years as a 'renaissance'.[4] Another stated that: 'The greatest state sponsored cultural innovations in the later 1930s were in education.'[5] Peter Fraser was appointed Minister of Education on the 3 December 1935 and carried the Labour Party's vision for education into government.[6] The commitment of Labour to social equality ensured that education would be a priority during their term in office.

Economic hardships, in conjunction with the conservative nature of educational authorities in New Zealand, had stifled innovation in education throughout the early 1930s.[7] However, in some New Zealand education circles, there was awareness that new and radical ideas were being advanced and tested overseas.[8] Books such as *Education of the Adolescent*,[9] advanced radical ideas about catering for 'children who think as it were with their hands.'[10] In Britain the

[4] A. E. Campbell, *Educating New Zealand*, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1941, p. 183.
[5] P. J. Gibbons, 'The Climate of Opinion', in Geoffrey W. Rice, (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand,* 2nd ed. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 329.
[6] Tim Beaglehole, 'Fraser, Peter 1884 - 1950'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography DNZB*, updated 7 April 2006, URL: http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/
[7] Gibbons, p. 329.
[8] William Renwick, 'Fraser on Education', in Margaret Clark, (ed.), *Peter Fraser. Master Politician*, Wellington, Dunmore Press, 1998, p. 70.
[9] W. H. Hadow, *The Education of the Adolescent. Report of the Consultative Committee*, London: H.M.S.O., reprinted 1951, pp. 72 & 76.
[10] Murdoch, J. H., *The High Schools Of New Zealand. A Critical Survey,* Wellington: NZCER, 1943, p. 164.

1944 Education Act[11] acknowledged the need to educate children according to individual needs.[12] Ideas about child-centred learning, such as those proposed by H. Caldwell Cook, were gaining currency: 'It must have occurred to every one that since a child's life under his own direction is conducted all in play, whatever else we want to interest him in should be carried on in that medium, or at the very least connected with play as closely as possible.'[13]

In 1919 James Shelley, a British born educationalist, was appointed to the newly created position of Professor of Education at Canterbury University College. Shelley arrived in New Zealand believing that, in a country some called a 'social laboratory', there would be an opportunity to 'reorganize and revitalize schooling through radically reformed teacher education.'[14] Although he was unsuccessful in revolutionizing New Zealand's education system through teacher training, he did introduce a new generation of educators, such as Beeby, who was Director of Education from 1940 to 1960,[15] to modern ideas about education.

Labour incorporated some of these ideas as part of their programme to transform New Zealand society.[16] It was able to implement its policies following the 1935 election through regulation, albeit supported by many within education.[17] Although the war years slowed down the pace of change, the appointment of Beeby as Director of Education in May 1940, a month after Peter Fraser became Prime Minister, helped maintain some of the momentum. The

[11] David Bell, 'Speech to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the 1944 Education Act', in Chris Livesey and Tony Lawson, *AS Sociology For AQA*, Hodder Education, 2005 URL: http://www.sociology.org.uk/as4e4b.htm, retrieved 21 April, 2004.
[12] Percy Nunn, *Education: Its Data and First Principles*, London: Edward Arnold, 1920, p. 5.
[13] H. Caldwell Cook *The Play* Way, London: Heinemann, 1917, p. 2.
[14] Ian Carter, 'Shelley, James 1884 - 1961'. *DNZB,* URL: http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/. updated 7 April 2006. See also Ian Carter, *The Life and Times of James Shelley. Gadfly,* Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993, pp. 101-2.
[15] Peter Kitchen, 'A giant of New Zealand education', *The Evening Post*, 12 March 1998, Edition 3, Page 7.
[16] D. F. Couling, 'The Secondary School Teacher in New Zealand 1945 – 2000: Teacher Identity and Education Reform', MA thesis in History, Massey University, 2005, p. 89.
[17] The enthusiasm for change shown at the 1937 New Zealand Education Fellowship Conference is testimony to this. See Noeline Alcorn, *To The Fullest Extent \Of His Powers' C.E. Beeby's Life In Education*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1999. pp. 80 – 92 and C. E. Beeby, (1992), pp. 103 – 106.

1942 Thomas Report,[18] for example, introduced a wider, less academic, curriculum. This allowed for the teaching of art and crafts as part of the common core of subjects. The report also hoped 'that the craft [that was taught] could lead on to further practice in adult life, or at least establish criteria of design and craftsmanship that could be applied in later life.'[19]

Pottery was considered an important part of the art and craft programme. At Timaru Girls' High School in the early 1950s "… every girl devoted two periods a week to art, and considerably more to crafts … [and] the wide range of activities provided for in the arts and crafts room and the pottery terrace enabled the school to qualify as one recognised to present candidates for … technical bursaries in art".[20]

[18] New Zealand Consultative Committee on the Post-Primary School Curriculum, *The Post-Primary School Curriculum. Report of the Committee Appointed by the Minister of Education in November 1942,* Wellington: Government Printer 1944. (The Thomas Report).
[19] *Art in Schools:* Wellington: Schools Publications Branch, Department of Education, 1978, p. 25.
[20] Averille Lawrence, *Lively Retrospect: Timaru Girls High School, 1880 – 1980.* Centennial Committee, Timaru High School Old Girls Associated, quoted in Marshall, p. 265.

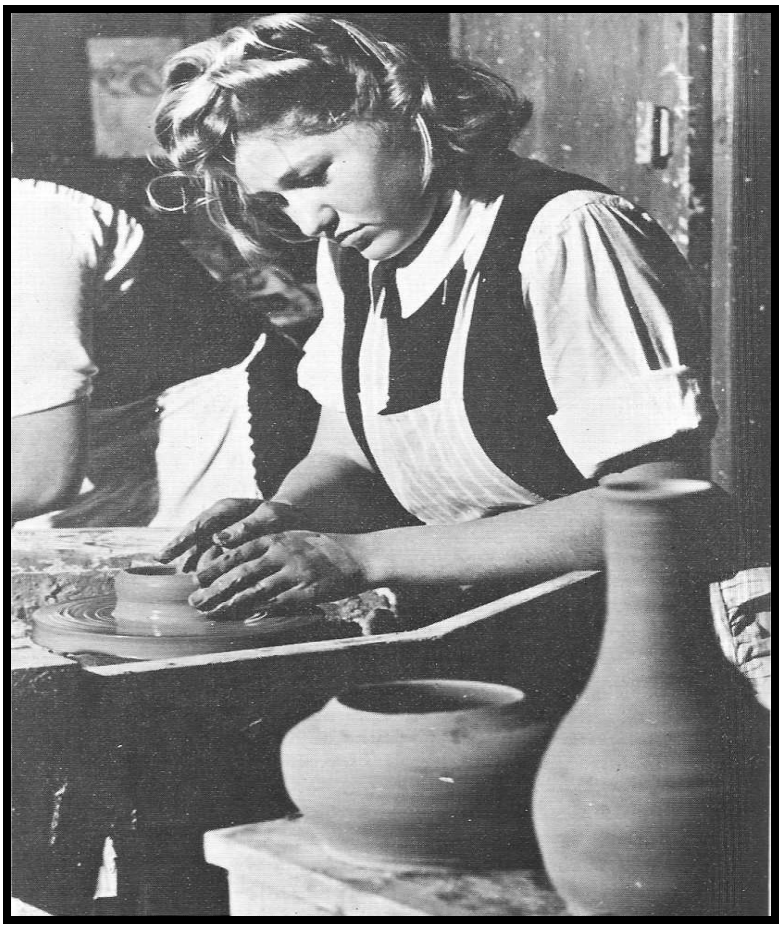

Figure IV. Serious craft. A pottery class at Avondale College, 1948. Fry, p. 148.

In 1946 Gordon Tovey was appointed National Supervisor Art and Craft and by 1947 more than 250 schools were operating the art scheme that Tovey and his colleagues had prepared.[21] Although the programme was directed at the graphic arts, the authors clearly had craft in mind:

> The [Education] Department believes that there should be no clear division between art and handwork: they should be closely inter-related: good handwork is impossible without consideration of design and colour. Artwork to many becomes meaningful only when it is involved in the production of something of practical use.[22]

[21] AJHR, E2, p. 3. 1944. See also *Art in Schools: The New Zealand Experience*, Wellington: Schools Publications Branch, Department of Education, 1978, p. 29.

[22] 'A Tentative Art Scheme for Primary Schools', Carol Henderson Papers, MS Papers 7096:74, p. 2. Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.

Figure V. Child-centred learning. 'A long-time favourite photograph of Gordon's [Tovey].' Henderson, p. 122.

The scheme was the culmination of the collective thinking of a range of politicians, education administrators and teachers who had read the works of Read, Cook and John Dewey, the American education reformer, and wished to arm all teachers with the means to educate 'through' art. The main objectives of the scheme were 'to give the child opportunity to express his own ideas and feelings … to give him some appreciation of beauty, … to help him develop certain skills.'[23] Cook's child-centred learning was acknowledged. 'Modern art teaching necessitates considerable understanding of individual children. Its emphasis is on helping the children only when he feels the need of assistance.'[24] As a result of this scheme, and its associated programme, teachers' college trained art specialists went out all over the country to ensure that classroom teachers had the support they needed.[25] 'He [Beeby] wanted

[23] Ibid., p. 3.
[24] Ibid.
[25] E. B. Brown, 'Conversation with Cliff Whiting about the Road Traveled and the Road Ahead', *Russell Review*, Vol. 15, (1992 – 93), p. 27. Between 1949 and 1960 131 teacher trainee students trained as art specialists – See *Art in Schools, p. 38.*

every teacher in New Zealand to be able to practise and introduce to children the value of arts in education.'[26]

Cliff Whiting and Lawson Fraser were two art specialists who worked in Nelson and saw the value of incorporating local craftspeople into school programmes.[27] Both men recognised the value of the specialised knowledge that local potters had developed and worked with Mirek Smišek finding local clays and building experimental kilns that could be used in schools.

> Through this period [1950s – 1960s] many hundreds of children had an experience of pottery, which at the very least awakened their appreciation of the craft. There are many reasons for their success but somehow here [in Nelson] a climate was created where appreciation of the design, texture and beauty of everyday things became widely accepted and valued.[28]

Smišek found the experience mutually beneficial. He described visits by children as 'refreshing' because they still retained the ability to 'enquire'.[29] Not all educators, however, were as open minded about the role of professional craftspeople working with teachers, and the growing field of art education was subject to interdepartmental rivalries. The founding head of the Victoria University Art and Design Centre for adults at Palmerston North, Jack Laird,[30] proposed that teachers who taught pottery in technical schools might benefit from some expert tuition. He claimed that Tovey responded: 'I'll not have your people [adult education tutors] teach my teachers.'[31]

As a result of two decades of curriculum change and experimentation, a generation of graduates of the New Zealand school system emerged with a heightened awareness of art and crafts.[32] Writing in the preface of a book

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[26] Doreen Blumhardt, interviewed by Dr. Damian H. Skinner, 16 February 1999. See also 'Doreen Blumhardt', *New Zealand Crafts*, No. 16 Autumn 1986, p. 10.
[27] Warren, p. 14. See also Henderson, p. 198 and NZP, 14:2, 1972, p. 30.
[28] Henderson, p. 198.
[29] Mirek Smišek, interviewed by Karen Patterson 2 September 1984.
[30] *Nelson Evening Mail* (NEM), 30 October 1964, p. 6.
[31] Laird, 1998 interview and Laird, 2000 interview.
[32] W. B. Sutch, *Colony or Nation? Economic Crises in New Zealand from the 1860s to the 1960s*, Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1966, p. 140. See also Anne Else (ed.), *Women*

authored by one of his art advisors, Doreen Blumhardt, Beeby was clear about the link between the earlier influence of schools and the flourishing interest in craft at the time the book was published.

> It cannot be entirely fortuitous that the two main crafts, pottery and weaving, which spread through the schools under her [Doreen Blumhardt] influence in the 1940s, are precisely those which claimed most passionate adherents among professionals, amateurs and purchasers in the last decade. There were other influences, of course: imported craftwork; practitioners who came from Europe and America with new media, standards and techniques; and New Zealand artist-craftsmen returning from abroad. But one thing that could not be imported was a generation of people who, early in their lives, had known the excitement of creating something, however humbly, with their own hands, and who had caught a fleeting glimpse of what it might mean to be a true craftsman.[33]

The people who became involved in the studio pottery movement expressed a love of art and crafts. Their experiences varied considerably but most were exposed to the more art-orientated and child-centred curriculum – particularly at primary school - than earlier generations had experienced. Some later observed their own children's art activities at school or were actively involved with Play Centres where clay was an important medium for learning.[34] Often memories of good times involving art at school, or an event or small encouragement at school, reignited a desire to be involved in a creative activity later in life. Jan Moresby, who received her primary and secondary education in Timaru in the 1940s and 50s, recalled that she loved drawing and painting at primary school and remembered a traveling art teacher would visit the school and give quite structured lessons.[35] A highlight of her secondary schooling was having a picture selected for the London Daily Mail art competition.[36] Ngaire Hands, who was educated in the 1930s and early 1940s, remembered sketching at primary school, and very structured art lessons throughout school.

Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand, Ngā Ropū Wāhine o te Motu, Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993, p. 453.

[33] Clarence Beeby, 'Preface' in Doreen Blumhardt, *Craft New Zealand. The Art of the Craftsman*, Wellington: Reed, 1981, p. vii. See also Doreen Blumhardt, *Craft New Zealand. The Art of the Craftsman,* Wellington: Reed, 1981, p. 2.

[34] Maggie Woodhead, interviewed by the author 24 November 2006.

[35] Moresby interview. The traveling art teacher mentioned may have been part of the itinerate art specialist programme established by Gordon Tovey.

[36] Ibid.

At the start of the Second World War she was permitted to undertake a secondary school art course, an unusual event for the time, and was allowed a considerable degree of freedom.[37] Students who lived in remote areas received their art instruction by correspondence. Jane McCallum, for example, received most of her primary education by correspondence in the 1950s and reported that her contact with her teacher was not close.[38]

In contrast, club members who were educated overseas often experienced a more in-depth art education. Maggie Woodhead was educated in Britain in the 1930s. Her school had a specialty art room and everyone did art: 'Art was considered quite important and it [the room] was used a lot'.[39] Although she did no work with clay she observed, 'students who advanced in art did'.[40] Nina Wilkinson was also educated in Britain, though in the 1940s, and observed that art was formally structured because it was an examination subject.[41]

Most club members who were educated in New Zealand enjoyed art at school but were not overtly aware of the changes that were slowly taking place within art and crafts education. Younger members were exposed to more art and crafts at school and enjoyed a more liberal programme using a wider range of materials. The changes the scheme introduced happened incrementally, in part because of the shortage of teaching staff during the war but, more importantly, because its implementation depended on motivating and convincing teachers that it was a valid method of teaching. M. G. Gilbert noted, 'that in this [1950s] early stage of development and expansion there was no official syllabus, nor any mention of one. Even the "tentative art scheme" of 1945 was only issued as a guide to teachers who wished to teach the new scheme.'[42] Many students in New Zealand schools were not exposed to the full impact of the changes that educators like Tovey had hoped would permeate the national education system.

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[37] Hands interview.
[38] McCallum interview.
[39] Woodhead interview
[40] Ibid.
[41] Wilkinson interview.
[42] M. G. Gilbert, 'The 1961 Syllabus and its Relevance Today', Sutch Papers, MS Papers 7096-53, (ATL), Wellington.

However, many would have been influenced by the increasing emphasis on the teaching of art as part of a more child-centred approach to learning and a more diverse and liberal curriculum.

The changes that came about because of the recommendations of the Thomas Report impacted on adults in the 1950s and 60s in other ways. The expansion of free secondary education, in conjunction with the increased post-war birth rate, resulted in an increase in schools and an increase in the level of involvement by parents and other adults. In addition, the expansion in the range of curriculum subjects such as art meant that specialist rooms were required.[43] The increased participation in schools by the local community often involved parents and usually took place outside normal school hours. The new, dedicated spaces, often constructed as a result of the fund-raising efforts of the community, encouraged many adults to renew their own interests outside of normal working and schools hours.[44] Formal recognition of the role of schools in adult learning came through a recommendation by the Education Commission on the use of schools as community centres by the Social and Cultural Committee of the National Development Conference in 1969.[45] The increasing numbers attending night classes was also encouraging the use of schools as community facilities for adult education.[46] Between 1962 and 1970 the number of these adult students increased from 34,443 to 42,161.[47] The increased involvement also helped break down negative perceptions some adults held about education.

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[43] Julie Barbour, 'Schooling Big Children? School Based Community Education' in John Benseman, Brian Findsen, and Miriama Scott, (eds), *The Fourth Sector. Adult and Community Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press, 1996, p. 248.
[44] Ibid.
[45] J. C. Dakin, *The Community Centre Story: Being an Account and a Discussion of New Zealand's Experiments with Community Centres and Kindred Institutions,* Wellington: National Council of Adult Education, 1979, p. 175.
[46] In Nelson, the numbers joining clubs suggests that pottery classes in schools were producing large numbers of graduates wishing to continue working in the craft. See Chappèll correspondence above.
[47] Dakin, p. 175.

The 1947 Adult Education Act that established the National Council of Adult Education (NCAE) specifically mentioned the arts in a statement about its goals: 'The NCAE's primary function was "to promote and foster adult education and the cultivation of the arts".'[48] But limited progress was made because of a lack of an overall policy framework and uncertain funding.[49] By the early 1960s the aims of adult education were still predominantly concerned with vocational training. The 1964 Education Act defined adult education in restrictive terms, clearly aligning it to students obtaining trade qualifications related to their job. This tended to discourage the more 'frivolous' types of learning, such as pottery, that did not have an extensive commercial base in industry. By the early 1970s however, adult education was being defined in the more liberal term 'continuing education' and included both 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' education.[50] The pottery classes at schools such as Waimea College started as a direct result of increased community involvement in education and government support of a more liberal interpretation of adult education. The relationships that developed in the classes between students and between tutors and students produced the pottery clubs that became a central part of the studio pottery movement in Nelson.

The club members interviewed for this thesis represent only a small proportion of the people involved in the studio pottery movement from the mid 1960s onward. They received their school education during a period of educational change – from the early 1930s through to the early 1960s – in New Zealand and overseas. Almost all appear to have had an intuitive desire to use their hands in a creative way and the opportunities presented by the increasing emphasis on community education were seized with enthusiasm. Many were aware of the influence of encouragement at school but had difficulty explaining what impact it had on their decision to attend pottery classes: 'I was using my hands and I just

[48] James Dakin, 'Looking Back' in Benseman, Findsen and Scott, p. 26.
[49] Robert Tobias, 'A History of Adult Learning and Education in Aotearoa / New Zealand', (study notes, Centre for Continuing Education, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, August 1993), p. 12.
[50] Ibid., p. 16.

think it did something for me internally. It might have been that I was pleased with myself. Something a little bit special and something that was personal.'[51]

For some, the desire to be creative lay dormant, as domestic tasks, family responsibilities and work took up most of their time. The urge to become involved with pottery was sometimes ignited by the sight of a pot being made on a potter's wheel or seeing some other clay related activity. Even when this happened, the interest needed to be placed in a context that could be connected to the role in life that they saw themselves as filling, or others expected of them. Jan Moresby observed her first pot being made on a potter's wheel by Justin Gardner at a fair in Nelson. She commented to her husband that '"I'd love to be able to do that". My husband said "Yes, make a nice big casserole", because there was six of us then … and I thought right, that is something I could do one day.'[52] Sometimes the initial interest in pottery had taken place years earlier. Ngaire Hands' introduction was as a child when she watched a woman throwing pots at the Winter Show in Hastings.[53] Jane McCallum observed a potter throwing at Crown Lynn during a class visit to Auckland[54] - although the trip was not specifically art related.[55] Others were introduced to pottery through friends. Carol Crombie discovered pottery in Dunedin through a friend who had started working with clay as a form of therapy after a 'mental breakdown'.[56] Some became involved in pottery for reasons unrelated to a specific interest in pottery per se, and had considered a range of subjects they might take night classes in. Sadie Sharpin and Mary Harvey enrolled themselves in a pottery class at Waimea College after reading an article in a Nelson paper that labeled local women 'couch potatoes'.[57] Sadie was

[51] Sadie Sharpin in Harvey and Sharpin interview.
[52] Moresby interview.
[53] Hands interview. For a background to pottery demonstrations at shows see Gail Henry, *New Zealand Pottery. Commercial and Collectable,* Auckland: Reed, 1999, p.60.
[54] Valerie Ringer Monk, *Crown Lynn: A New Zealand Icon,* Auckland: Penguin Books, 2006, p. 74. Crown Lynn was the largest commercial pottery in New Zealand.
[55] McCallum interview.
[56] Carol Crombie, interviewed by the author 21 November 2006. Also pre-interview notes prepared by Carol Crombie and in the possession of the author.
[57] Sadie Sharpin in Harvey and Sharpin interview.

also encouraged to join the class by a friend who felt it would help her after her husband died.[58]

By the early 1970s the interest in pottery was growing dramatically. The pottery clubs in Nelson developed out of the classes that people such as Mirek Smišek tutored in Nelson and at Waimea College, and later Chris du Fresne at Waimea College and then in Mapua.[59] The logistical limitations, particularly within schools, made it increasingly evident to those who were enthusiastic about the craft, that if they were to take their interest in pottery further a more sympathetic environment was needed. In addition, the teaching of pottery to adults appears to have also revolved around the need for social interaction as much as it was concerned with developing skills. Peter Cape noted that 'it was … one of the notable aspects of pottery in New Zealand that formal tuition has always taken second place, and the main emphasis has been on experience and the interchange of ideas.'[60]

While classes within the community education programmes in schools and technical schools helped introduce people to pottery, the practical aspects of the craft and desire to socialise were being met only in part. Bob Heatherbell, a founding member of one of the Nelson clubs, summed up the problem of working with clay. 'Pottery is a continuous, progressive business. Either you're doing it or you're not. It's not like weaving or some of the crafts that you can actually put down and then pick it up again at a later stage and continue. Clay doesn't wait around for you.'[61]

In 1973 Bob Heatherbell made his Waimea orchard shed available for the formation of a pottery club called Craft Potters Nelson (CPN).[62] By 1975 CPN

[58] Ibid.
[59] Bateup interview. See also NEM, 30 October 1964, p. 6.
[60] Peter Cape, *Please Touch. A Survey of the Three-Dimensional Arts in New Zealand*, Auckland: Collins, 1980, p.80.
[61] Bob Heatherbell, interviewed by Karen Patterson 4 November 1984.
[62] Warren, p. 32.

had 140 members and a waiting list of forty,[63] and was operating five fulltime classes.[64] Other groups formed later in Motueka and Nelson city.[65] Public enthusiasm was very high. At the twenty-fifth anniversary of Craft Potters in 1999 the guest speaker gave a sense of that enthusiasm. ' … I can tell you that the first real open day was such a success that it was necessary to have a good number of parking wardens to handle the traffic … can you imagine queues of perhaps 100 trying to get in the door!'[66] Heatherbell was also surprised by the public reaction: 'Mr. Heatherbell said at times there was difficulty managing the numbers and people waiting to join. 'It astonished us, the whole thing just took off and became hugely successful.''[67]

Bob Heatherbell believed that the interest in pottery, both by those who took part in the making of it and by the public who purchased the finished items, was related to four factors. The first was the twenty years of peace and prosperity that New Zealand had experienced prior to 1974. The second was government protection of the industry.[68] The third factor was the attraction of 'alternative lifestyles', and lastly an acceptance by the general public of crafts of a more rustic quality. [69] Cape suggested that this acceptance was 'a reaction against the "cocoon of indifference" in which the perfection of industrial designing had wrapped us, … .'[70] According to a report prepared for UNESCO, approximately three thousand New Zealanders were actively involved in pottery by 1973.[71]

Most club members discovered a medium and an environment that satisfied their need to create and to be socially involved. But with the involvement came a

[63] Ibid., p. 33.
[64] *Nelson Mail*, 9 March 1999, Edition 2, p. 4.
[65] Warren, pp. 34 – 36. The Motueka Pottery Workshop began in 1974 and Nelson Community Potters in 1976.
[66] Bruce Hands, 'Anniversary Speech Notes, 1999 – 2006', copy in the possession of the author.
[67] Quoted in the *Mail*, 9 March 1999, p. 4.
[68] Government protection is discussed in Chapter Three.
[69] Heatherbell interview.
[70] Cape, *Please Touch*, p.11. Cape believed that the New Zealand public was prepared to accept a lower quality standard for local crafts than they would for imported industrial items. A reaction to a *zeitgeist* in New Zealand's cultural history.
[71] Bernard W. Smyth, *The Role of Culture in Leisure Time in New Zealand*, Paris: Unesco, 1973, p. 35.

conflict with family duties and guilt at the degree of satisfaction experienced. Club founders, such as Carol Crombie and Ngaire Hands, had moved to Nelson from other parts of New Zealand and missed their involvement with pottery. Carol Crombie expressed the wish to continue her association with clay: 'Once you started using clay it's something that doesn't really leave you.'[72] Jan Moresby likened her involvement with pottery to an addiction suggesting there was a degree of guilt. 'It almost became an addiction. I really had to curb my desire … because I had three young children and a father-in-law and of course my husband to tend to. I kept feeling drawn out to the wheel at Craft Potters.'[73] Her sense of guilt was counter-balanced by her wish to be 'with other like-minded people'.[74] June Reay described her involvement as 'a release' and a separate part of her life: 'A lot of my friends didn't even know I made pottery.'[75] Maggie Woodhead explained the combination of interest in pottery and the need for social contact: 'Some were there for purely social reasons. Most were dead keen on pottery. It was a great emotional release I think.'[76] She also recalls that others felt the sense of release: 'I remember one person … quite a prominent Nelson person and one day he said "When I come home and I've had a hard day in that bloody place" was what he said, … "I sit down at my wheel and all the tension runs out of my fingers", and that I think appealed to almost everybody potting.'[77]

Commentators at the time had difficulty explaining why so many people were interested in pottery, but some felt that they could accurately describe the 'typical' amateur potter:

> The typical amateur potter is likely to be a housewife, who has installed benches and a wheel in a garden shed or basement room. She may own her own kiln, but it is more likely that her pieces are fired in one which has been purchased by a group of potters who have established a club. If evening classes are available at her local school, she may well be a regular attender. Perhaps, like many of her friends, she enjoys

[72] Crombie interview.
[73] Moresby interview.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Reay interview.
[76] Woodhead interview.
[77] Ibid.

> experimenting with clays and slips which she herself has dug out of banks and cuttings on foraging expeditions in her own district. While she admires enormously the work of the country's more experienced potters, attends exhibitions of their work, subscribes to the association's magazine *The New Zealand Potter* and reads it avidly, she herself has no aspirations for public recognition as an artist. Indeed she finds it difficult to explain the satisfactions which she derives from pottery – she may say she finds it relaxing, fascinating, exciting or rewarding. Because she considers laying claim to aesthetic susceptibilities a trifle pretentious, she will almost certainly not say that pottery provides her with a chance to satisfy an artistic instinct – to delight in making an object of beauty from simple natural materials – to become completely absorbed in a creative process. Yet that may be much closer to the truth.[78]

Even later, academic commentators felt they could sum up why so many people, women in particular, learned to make pottery: 'For many New Zealand housewives with time on their hands these developments [the growth of classes] were welcomed: pottery and weaving were activities which produced articles of value for the home.'[79] These very generalised pictures of the 'typical' potter embedded themselves in the minds of many New Zealanders and came to represent a stereotype rather than a true representation of the full range of people attracted to pottery. Women played an important role in all aspects of the development of the movement, from the running of regional clubs through to the founding of the NZSP, but only occasionally constituted more than 60% of the membership of any of the organisations.[80]

Women found club membership liberating – it became a time they could call their own. Jane McCallum, who was both a club member and tutor, described that involvement: 'There were some people in the night class I took who were just happy to sit and chat to one another and then have a wee go on the wheel and then that was it. … It was their night out really.'[81] For some women, the opportunity to be involved in the aspects of pottery that had generally, in the

[78] Smyth, p. 36.
[79] Stirling, p. 16. See Carter interview in Chapter Three for the response from a professional potter to the increasing number of women starting pottery.
[80] Wilkinson interview. Most club members interviewed by the author reported a similar gender balance. Approximately 67% of the exhibiting members of the NZSP between 1957 and 1962 were women – see NZP, 6:1, 1963, pp. 48 – 49.
[81] McCallum interview.

past, been associated exclusively with men, was also an attraction. In the mid 1960s only men threw pots at Waimea Pottery.[82] Jane McCallum believed that 'It was the start of equality and it was generally equality within the club',[83] and Ngaire Hands thought that 'the women were quite happy to do everything.'[84] Other members found the equality in the clubs suited their nature and their upbringing. Maggie Woodhead felt that men were scared of women at her club but she felt comfortable, as she had often worked in a male environment.[85] The 1970s were, of course, the years of the emergence of feminism in New Zealand and elsewhere.[86]

For some, the enthusiasm for pottery began to consume large amounts of time. Firing kilns often required members to be in attendance for up to twenty hours – June Reay remembers working regularly 'until three or four in the morning'.[87] Members were also expected to serve in the club galleries as well as find time for their own work. The amount of time spent at the club created difficulties that some club members found disturbing: 'Once you get the bug for clay its certainly hard to put down. This was happening there and some of them were there all night. … forget the families. Families suffered – there were two divorces at least.'[88]

The conflicts that absences from the home created were, to some extent, compensated for by the sense of belonging that membership of a club gave to some club members. The sense of community that developed can be explained, in part, by the relatively small skill gap between those teaching and those learning. Jack Laird was invited to tutor a weekend pottery school in Hawera in the early 1960s.

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[82] Carl Vendelbosch interviewed by Dr. Damian H. Skinner, 26 November 2000.
[83] McCallum interview.
[84] Hands interview.
[85] Woodhead interview.
[86] For further analysis of the impact of feminism on New Zealand art see Juliet Batten, 'Emerging From Underground: The Women's Art Movement in New Zealand', *Women's Studies Conference Papers, 81*, 1882, pp. 67 – 74.
[87] Reay interview.
[88] Hands interview.

> The tutor who ran the course was there sitting in front of me. He said, "You know it took us quite a few weeks before we tumbled to this water racket." I couldn't understand what he was talking about. It dawned on me. He knew so little about pottery … he didn't even know you had to wet your hands to throw the clay.[89]

The basic level of skill demonstrated by some tutors was sometimes linked, in the minds of students, to the materials used in the classes. In Nelson, classes at Nelson Polytechnic began in 1963. Ngaire Hands was a student in the class and was aware that the level of instruction was low: 'The tutor was not very knowledgeable' and Hands felt discouraged because they were 'working only in earthenware.'[90] To some extent earthenware became a metaphor representing a lower quality of pottery or a lower standard of tuition: 'When we started off it was all Bernard Leach and we didn't use bright colours – they looked tatty. They [earthenware] were too fragile – they were too easily chipped.'[91] Many tutors were barely one step ahead of their students. Nina Wilkinson joined her first class in Wairoa and 'took over the class because she was the most experienced student.'[92] She admitted she learned more as a tutor than as a student: '[It was] the blind leading the blind.'[93]

As a means of overcoming the problem of inadequate tutorage, clubs would often invite professional potters to take one-off courses,[94] or club members would collectively visit potters at their studios. Visits to studios inspired some to contemplate becoming professionals. Jane McCallum was working as a primary school teacher and attending pottery classes at night and in the weekends. After visiting local potters 'I just wanted to be my own boss and create things. [It] just seemed like a great lifestyle.'[95] Others enjoyed seeing how professional potters lived and worked: 'I … loved their homes and their settings … I was drawn to that [way of life].'[96] The freedom that professional potters appeared to enjoy was

[89] Laird (1998) interview.
[90] Hands interview.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Wilkinson interview.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Bateup interview. Before he moved to Nelson Jack Laird ran a course at Craft Potters.
[95] McCallum interview.
[96] Moresby interview.

a major part of the desire to become a professional. Nina Wilkinson liked the idea of being able to work at her own speed and 'the freedom of it.'[97]

The visits to potteries also helped dispel the 'hippy' reputation, in the minds of club members if not the general public, which was associated with the studio pottery movement. Jan Moresby noted that 'It [pottery] did have a hippy connotation in the early days … I just explained that they were normal people like myself.'[98] Jane McCallum was also aware of the dichotomy that existed between the public perception of the movement and the reality: 'A lot of people thought that potters were just a bunch of hippies – but they weren't really. They were generally businessmen or women.'[99] The association with the hippy movement was difficult for club members to understand: 'There were very few potters that actually looked like what people perceived potters to look like. They actually all looked like doctors and lawyers.'[100] The confirmation that life as a professional potter could exist in the 'normal' world may have encouraged some club members to plan to take their interest to a higher level. Certainly the realisation that 'ordinary' people could earn a living from a 'hobby' was surprising for some club members in much the same way that novice potters were surprised that the public was prepared to buy their work.[101]

The realisation that one could become a semi-professional or professional potter with relative ease created a dilemma for the clubs. Was the primary purpose of membership to assist amateurs or help train professionals? Even the term 'hobby' became a point of conflict. In a 1972 report on an in-service course for teachers of pottery in adult classes, Peter Stichbury, who was already a professional potter and teacher, criticised the use of the name "Hobby Classes" as a name for evening classes - but qualified his criticism:

> I agree that this title [hobby class] doesn't add any feeling of status or value to the classes. However … unless a syllabus is offered in which the tutors state clearly that the course is for students who are prepared to

[97] Wilkinson interview.
[98] Moresby interview.
[99] McCallum interview.
[100] Reay interview.
[101] The ability to earn a living as a potter is discussed further in Chapter Three.

> continue on their own after taking the course, in other words a basic course designed to give the student enough experience to continue his own development, then these classes are perhaps only "hobby classes"[102]

The different goals of the club members often resulted in conflict. It was acknowledged that the desire to make a living from pottery was an important aim for some club members and the clubs encouraged the development of professional potters. But there was also a concern that such people would demand more resources and might compromise the legal status of the club: ' … that person [someone who wanted to become a professional] wanted to dominate and take up a lot of time and space.'[103] Although cases of people joining the clubs specifically for personal gain were rare, June Reay recalled an example: 'I remember somebody that had stalls at markets and he took orders for some pottery before he had even made them. He thought he was going to come to Craft Potters and make the pots and fire them. But he wasn't allowed to and he tried everything to get [them made].'[104] Nina Wilkinson started out as a member of Nelson Community Potters (NCP) and became a professional potter. Club members were able to recognise potential professionals by the amount of kiln space that they used: 'Sometimes the next step was when they would be reluctant to put slower members work in [the kiln] with theirs.'[105] At Craft Potters those wishing to become professionals built a separate kiln outside that was not part of the club's assets and they stopped using the club's equipment, but … remained club members: '… we still clung onto the mother's apron strings.'[106] A split had developed and the kiln became a physical representation of the divide, or a point of difference, between the amateurs and professionals.

The capacity to make a financial gain for members was a feature of pottery clubs. Most hobbies require adherents to spend money rather than make it. The

[102] Peter Stichbury, 'Comments on Pottery Tutors' Course', 1972, NCAE 4, W2522, 48e, Box 3, 'Teaching Pottery to Adults', Archives New Zealand / Te Rua Mahara o te Kawanatanga, Head Office, Wellington, p.2.
[103] Crombie interview.
[104] Reay interview.
[105] Wilkinson interview.
[106] McCallum interview.

Nelson pottery clubs' principal role was, as the rulebook of the Nelson Community Potters Inc. (NCP) stated, 'To assist, teach and encourage members in the art of pottery.'[107] The 'encouragement' included supporting members who wished to turn professional. The conflicting aims of encouraging professionalism and ensuring that the legal status of a club was not compromised were problematic. Clubs attempted to protect their status by setting rules that covered situations where a member might attempt to receive financial gain from membership. Rule 25 in the NCP Constitution, under the 'General' heading, stated that: 'No member shall receive or obtain any pecuniary gain … from the property or operations of the group.'[108] Later, the club's concern seemed to have surfaced again. In a letter from the club's solicitor to the secretary, the law, as it related to incorporated societies was carefully spelt out: ' … whatever activity the Society engages in the profit must go to the Society and not be distributed in any shape or form to members.'[109] And, to add further weight to the warning, the club 'needed to charge a commission on sales otherwise … it could be said in certain circumstances that the Society was operating for the pecuniary gain of its members.'[110] At Craft Potters the selling of pottery for profit was also discouraged. The sale of pottery for members through the gallery was to cover expenses.[111]

Encouraging professionalism amongst club members also began a debate over the level of education that members could expect or would want. The clubs did not want to discourage the social benefits of club membership for those who were beginning to earn a significant income from the sale of their work, but realised they were not equipped for the higher level of training that those people might expect. The need for further training in Nelson was gaining more currency because Nelson was now recognised as a centre for pottery but did not have

[107] Rules of the Nelson Community Potters Incorporated, October 1976, Tasman Bays Heritage Trust/The Nelson Provincial Museum, Archives collection, AG 277.
[108] Ibid.
[109] J. A. Doogue in correspondence to Mrs King, Nelson Community Potters Incorporated, 19 December 1978, Tasman Bays Heritage Trust/The Nelson Provincial Museum, Archives collection, AG 277.
[110] Ibid.
[111] McCallum interview.

advanced education facilities such as the full-time ceramics course that Otago Polytechnic had started in 1973.[112] Club members wishing to undertake advanced, accredited training had to travel to Dunedin. In a letter to the Director of Community Education, David Nightingale, the President of Community Potters, Jim Chappèll, discussed the formation of a full-time ceramics course in Nelson:

> We also must bear in mind that Community Potters was formed as a meeting ground for all people interested in the craft of pottery and we have to be careful not to become too strongly biased towards full time education at the disadvantage of our ordinary members. This Society will welcome and support the development of a craft school in Nelson and looks forward to the advantages to be gained from sharing lectures, lecturers, and equipment but we must not lose sight of the recreational value of the organisation which makes it so attractive to so many people.[113]

In addition, club members who felt their future in ceramics was more concerned with the 'non-functional'[114] sculptural side of the craft could not expect to be accepted into the more rigorous, production throwing, learning environment that had been part of the training of potters at Waimea Pottery since the mid 1960s.[115]

The pottery clubs served an important purpose in the lives of the many people who belonged to them. Many club members had fond memories of art and crafts at school and the classes were a natural extension of that interest – without the bad memories. The clubs became a focal point for a hobby that some turned into a job and a way of life. In post-war New Zealand it was possible, even for people with quite limited skills and knowledge of materials, to successfully earn a living as a potter. For many members the idea that they could become 'potters' and 'artists' helped raise their image of themselves and their role in society. Jane McCallum remembered that 'pottery was quite a thing to be doing. I remember being quite proudly introduced as "my potter friend". You were a

[112] NZP, 15:2, 1973, pp. 2 -4. Also see Stirling, p. 51.
[113] Chappèll correspondence.
[114] 'Non-functional' refers to ceramic items that could not be used for the preparation and consumption of food and beverages.
[115] The employment of potters at Waimea Pottery is discussed in Chapter Three.

little bit up the social ladder.'[116] Furthermore, the companionship with other like-minded people played an important part in their lives - as much as the chance to learn skills that would improve their work.

By the mid 1970s pottery had become an important part of the Nelson economy. The clubs, the amateurs and the semi-professionals helped present pottery to the many tourists who visited the area through demonstrations and through allowing visitors, and locals, to 'have a go'.[117] In conjunction with the professional potters working in their studios they conjured up a picture of tranquility and peace that helped promote the pottery they were making and selling.

[116] McCallum interview.
[117] Moresby interview.

Chapter Three

Economic Encouragement and Economic Benefit

'They [potters] had settled in very nicely to the notion that … was very foreign to us, that you could actually make a handsome living, not just a living, but a handsome living as a potter.'[1]

Bill and Nancy Malcolm emigrated from the United States of America in 1971[2] and began making pottery in New Zealand in 1972.[3] They were surprised at the level of interest in pottery and the relative ease with which one could make a living as a potter. New Zealand born potters appeared less surprised and tended not to question the conditions that permitted and encouraged the commercial expansion of the studio pottery movement. This chapter will examine the New Zealand economy prior to, and during the development of the movement, to explain the conditions that actively encouraged the development of pottery, not simply as a popular hobby, but as an important part of the Nelson economy. It will also consider how the ideas of some individuals, both at a governmental level and locally, were used to encourage the studio pottery movement and the type of development they wished to see.

One of the major features of New Zealand's economy from the early 1950s until the early 1970s was the level of government control.[4] Direct government involvement in the economy had increased in the late 1930s to regulate internal and external fluctuations in economic activity and to maintain a certain standard

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[1] Bill Malcolm in Malcolm interview. Juanita Edelmann, another American immigrant, recorded that in one weekend in the early 1970s she sold enough pottery to feed her family for six months. See Derek Grzelewski, 'A Feeling for Clay', *New Zealand Geographic,* Number 23, July – September 1999, p. 79.
[2] Bill Malcolm in Malcolm interview.
[3] Julie Warren, *Clay: The Pottery Industry – 150 Years in Nelson,* Produced by the Nelson Potters Association, p. 27.
[4] Both Labour and National accepted price controls, subsidies, tariffs and import and credit controls during this time. See Michael Bassett, *The State in New Zealand 1840 – 1984: Socialism Without Doctrines?*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998, p. 291.

of social welfare.[5] The Labour Party, which had initiated the control, was only in power for six of the twenty years this thesis encompasses but the changes it had made between 1935 and 1949 set the tone for over forty years.[6] Although the reasons for the controls - low overseas funds, trading imbalance and fear of unemployment - had largely disappeared within a few years of the end of the Second World War, new reasons emerged that encouraged the extension of controls, namely, newly established industries and currency requirements.[7] In addition, there existed a vested interest in continuing controls in some sectors of the New Zealand economy,[8] both for the commercial advantage they provided and to retain political power.

When the National Government came to office in 1949 it recognised that New Zealanders were supportive of the social welfare legislation introduced by Labour and had come to accept that full employment was a natural and desirable economic goal.[9] The control on imports as a means of maintaining full employment, was one part of the economy that National did contest - an opposition based on philosophical grounds. National recognised that there was a growing consumer society: 'In New Zealand, the National Party had started to address voters as "consumers" whose "rights" to fulfil their dreams were threatened by shortages, controls and bureaucracy.'[10] National wanted to position itself as progressive government but its liberalisation policies did not achieve the results it hoped and conversely confirmed Labour's policies. Between 1950 and 1957 the National Government removed 681 items from the

[5] Brian Easton and Norman Thomson, *An Introduction to the New Zealand Economy,* St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1982, p. 32.
[6] Robert Chapman, 'From Labour to National' in Geoffrey W. Rice, (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand,* 2nd ed. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 351.
[7] P. A. Lane, 'An Examination of the Methods and Effects of Restricting External Trade with Particular Reference to the New Zealand Experience (1938 – 68)', PhD thesis in Social Science, Massey University, 1974, p. 208.
[8] Ibid. For controls on pottery see Valerie Ringer Monk, *Crown Lynn: A New Zealand Icon,* Auckland: Penguin Books, 2006, pp. 73 – 74.
[9] Chapman, p. 373.
[10] Chris Brickell, 'The Politics of Post-War Consumer Culture', *The New Zealand Journal of History* (NZJH), 40:2, October 2006, p.148.

import control list. The percentage of private imports controlled by import licensing slid from 99.5% to 13%.[11] Over the same period, however, New Zealand experienced a serious drain on overseas funds and an alarming fall in overseas assets.[12] The second Labour Government, elected in 1957, reimposed import controls at the beginning of 1958.[13] The National Government that regained office in 1960 maintained a policy of full import control and in 1962 set a new tariff schedule[14] in place, based on a revised 1934 schedule. The new tariff regime aimed to '… remove all duty from many raw materials and goods not produced in New Zealand and to provide protection for New Zealand industry.'[15] Furthermore, devaluation in 1967 effectively acted like an additional control that represented a tariff of 25% on the imports from some countries.[16]

The economic policies of both Labour and National, whether through conscious policy or by default, resulted in 'unsurpassed prosperity and social tranquillity', for almost twenty years.[17] Wolfgang Rosenberg, a noted academic and economist of the period explained the success in terms of a "Magic Square" of instruments (policies) that successive New Zealand governments used between 1938 and 1975 to maintain this prosperity.[18] These consisted of:

> [A] balance of payments equilibrium [which employed] quantitative import controls and tariffs along with exchange rate controls, [the] encouragement of investment by [the] restriction of imports, [the] encouragement of expenditure on investment and consumption [with] public expenditure to take up any slack in private investment [and finally]

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[11] Lane, p. 234.
[12] W. Rosenberg, *What Every New Zealander Should Know About The Effects of Import Controls and Industrialization in New Zealand*, Christchurch: New Zealand Monthly Review Society Inc (NZMRS), 1965, p.33. See also Lane, p. 240 and Bassett, p. 268.
[13] Keith Sinclair, *Walter Nash,* Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 308.
[14] Bassett, p. 310.
[15] Lane, p. 254.
[16] Ibid., p. 267.
[17] Graeme Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern' in Rice, *Oxford History*, 1992, p. 452.
[18] Wolfgang Rosenberg, *New Zealand can be Different and Better, Why Deregulation does not Work,* Christchurch: NZMRS, 1993, p. 41.

> inflation control [including] income control through the system of conciliation and arbitration …[19]

All these measures created an economic environment conducive to the growth of the studio pottery industry. The tariffs on imported pottery that Tom Clark, the owner of Crown Lynn Pottery, was able to coerce out the National Government from 1960 gave a specific boost to all forms of pottery.[20]

The protection of an economy was not, at the time, considered a radical economic policy. Dr Peter G Elkan, who had studied the New Zealand economy for his PhD at Cambridge University[21] noted in a research paper prepared for the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (Inc) that '[his model] suggests that over that period [1952 to 1967] New Zealand was, on the whole, successfully maximizing its national income; this not so much by deliberate and informed policy but partly through the workings of political democracy and partly through economic luck.'[22] The apparently benign economic conditions were ideal for the emerging studio pottery movement in that they presented an increasingly wealthy public with the opportunity to purchase New Zealand household items in place of imported items, which were restricted by government regulations and a shortage of overseas funds.[23]

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[19] Ibid., p. 55.
[20] Monk, p. 74. Note: The tariffs applied specifically to the type of items produced at Crown Lynn. For an outline of the NZSP case against the lifting of tariffs see NZP, 26:1, 1984, pp. 36 – 37.
[21] Brian Easton, email to author 2 May 2007.
[22] Peter G. Elkan, *The Meaning of Protection*, Research Paper No. 21 N.Z. Institute of Economic Research, Wellington: 1977, p. 1. See also Peter G. Elkan, *The New Model Economy: Economic Inventions for the Rest of the Century*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982, pp. 116 – 117.
[23] Lane points out that New Zealand consumers were silent on the issue of import controls, p. 269.

The New Zealand economy, however, was lopsided, with an overdependence on agriculture and a tiny manufacturing base.[24] Economists such as Bill Sutch, a dominant figure in New Zealand economics at the government level, and Rosenberg, were mindful of the cost of a declining manufacturing sector to the New Zealand economy.[25] John Marshall, Minister for Industries and Commerce in the National Government that gained power in 1960, supported this view.[26] With fewer people needed to produce an increasing volume of pastoral produce, the stagnation of manufacturing would result in increased unemployment.[27] The solution was to encourage the growth and diversification of New Zealand manufacturing. Later Sutch added another concern ' that smaller centres [were missing out because of] the lack of opportunity for sharing in New Zealand's industrial development'.[28] The comparative and continuing decline of manufacturing in New Zealand was apparent in Nelson – the number of factories in the province shrank from 253 in the 1958/59 financial year to 227 in the 1960/61 year.[29] The growing studio pottery movement in Nelson appeared to offer an example of how small manufacturers, using local materials, good design and producing in the smaller centres, could prove the worth of the Sutch / Rosenberg ideas. In addition, as we shall see below, studio pottery was considered important enough in the region to be given financial support by the local community.

New Zealand's economy was still dominated by primary production and therefore it was inevitable that there would be a vigorous debate on the merits

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[24] Brian Easton, *In Stormy Seas. The Post-War New Zealand Economy*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1997, p. 9. For the link between these concerns and the teaching of Art in secondary schools see *Art in Schools*, p. 43.
[25] For an alternative view of Sutch and Rosenberg's influence see Bassett, p. 297.
[26] Mark Rolfe, 'Faraway Fordism: The Americanization of Australia and New Zealand during the 1950s and 1960s' *NZJH*, 33:1, April 1999, pp. 79 - 80.
[27] Between 1948 and 1958 the percentage of the workforce in primary production had declined from 21.2% to 17.3% while manufacturing had remained static at 25%. See AJHR, H44, 1959, p. 11. See also Endres, 'The Political Economy of W B Sutch', p. 24.
[28] AJHR, H44, 1963, p. 10.
[29] *1963 New Zealand Official Year Book* (NZOYB).

of investing in manufacturing versus farming. Professor Bryan Philpott, with a background in the meat and wool industry,[30] disputed Sutch and Rosenberg's argument in favour of investing in import substitution industries at the expense of agriculture. He based his analysis on the capital employed and output in agriculture for the ten years prior to 1964 and found that

> … rough as these measures are, they do indicate that development in agriculture will return high yields to the nation, and, … far higher than what is being returned in many import replacement industries if the products of these industries were to be priced at a level comparable with import prices.[31]

Furthermore, he argued:

> In this way agriculture development generated employment right through the economy to a far greater extent than it generated on farms themselves. People like the Secretary of Industries and Commerce, Dr. W. B. Sutch, who recently claimed that industrial growth was needed to maintain full employment, had completely and conveniently ignored this fact.[32]

Nevertheless, Bill Sutch continued to raise his concern about New Zealand's dependence on its farming sector over many years. In 1957, as an assistant secretary in the Department of Industries and Commerce, Sutch presented a paper on the future relationship between the agriculture, service and manufacturing sectors. The conclusion reached was that: 'The agriculture and service sectors would not grow sufficiently to maintain full employment.' Furthermore, it concluded: 'To maintain full employment, the manufacturing sector would have to absorb over one in three new workers over the next twenty years.'[33]

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[30] Brian Easton, *The Nation Builders,* Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2001, p. 215.
[31] Bryan Philpott, 'Agricultural Development Versus Manufacturing' *Borthwicks Bulletin,* (BB) (1964), p. 2. See also 'Agricultural Development More Profitable', *Straight Furrow*, 7 October 1964, p. 6.
[32] Philpott, BB, p. 3.
[33] W. B. Sutch, *The Next Two Decades of Manufacturing in New Zealand,* Wellington: Industries and Commerce Department, 1957, p. 11.

Since the 1930s there had been a steady decline in the level of consumer goods imported in comparison to total imports. By 1958, when further controls on imports were introduced, consumer imports declined a further 19 per cent.[34] Amongst the items that became scarcer, certainly in terms of choice, were items such as pottery commonly used in New Zealand homes. In addition, New Zealand manufacturers were having difficulty obtaining imported raw materials and machinery and therefore production of pottery at home was also made more difficult. Studio potters were also hampered by the restrictions. Harry and May Davis transported fifteen tons of equipment and raw materials with them when they emigrated to New Zealand. In part this was because Harry had built his own, specifically designed machines, but also because they were aware of the difficulties accessing imported materials.[35]

The encouragement to build industries in the regions based on the manufacture of well designed products coincided with ideas that Jack Laird had been formulating. Using as his model Bernard Leach's St Ives pottery, Laird presented a case for the revitalisation of rural areas through the development of craft industries.[36] This model was also attractive to economists such as Philpott who did not want to see rural areas depopulated. The plan, based on the experiences of the Rural Industries Bureau in England,[37] recognised three conditions that would make small rural workshops viable. The first was the need to take a team approach to small-scale production. Laird was critical of the amount of attention that was being given to individual craftspeople – particularly those producing the 'unusual'.[38] The second was to ensure that,

[34] AJHR, H44, 1959, p. 5.
[35] Harry and May Davis interviewed by Karen Patterson, 3 October 1984.
[36] J. D. Laird, 'The Craftsman in Rural Communities', 1960, p. 1.
[37] Archives Network Wales. http://www.archivesnetworkwales.info/. The Rural Industries Bureau (RIB) was established in 1921 by the Ministry of Agriculture and was funded through the Development Commission. Its purpose was to develop rural industries by providing technical advice and assistance to country workshops. It produced various booklets and reports and the quarterly magazine, *Rural Industries*. See also Laird, 'Craftsman',1960, p. 3.
[38] Laird 'Craftsman', 1960, p. 1.

through pricing and quality, the items produced would be in demand. Laird could see that there was an increasing demand for hand-made items as the nation became more prosperous and demand was restricted by import controls. 'With most New Zealand-made earthenware produced by one firm, and a limit to the amount of ware imported it was up to the studio potters here to provide a much-needed variety.'[39] Laird's concerns were given official recognition five years later by Sutch's replacement, M. J. Moriarty: 'There is, however, a danger in countries with a small domestic market, that a protected environment can cause a lack of competition leading to the introduction of manufacturing and commercial rigidities inconsistent with the attainment of fullest efficiency in production.'[40] The third condition was the need to be flexible in production and price so that small runs could be produced without expensive retooling.[41]

Laird looked to Denmark to illustrate his argument. 'It [Denmark] was an agricultural country and had a comparable population. There a cottage-industry style of handcraft production had grown up alongside machine-industries.'[42] Laird had seen Scandinavian pottery at an expo at South Bank in London in 1952. He was attracted to the designs, which he described as having 'a little hint of post-modernism.'[43] In contrast with the nostalgic work that was being produced at St Ives, it was forward-looking. The same conflict between anti-modern and modern ideas had been a feature of the British craft movement several decades earlier.[44]

[39] *Press*, 23 July, 1963, p. 2. See Crown Lynn comments above.
[40] AJHR, H44, 1965, p. 6.
[41] Laird, 'Craftsman', 1960, pp. 1 - 2.
[42] *Press*, 23 July, 1963, p. 2.
[43] Laird 1998 interview.
[44] Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 9.

Laird's ideas meshed with those of Sutch who also believed the Scandinavian model would suit New Zealand and he too admired Scandinavian design.[45] Sutch, who was actively involved in New Zealand's cultural community,[46] had opened Laird's first exhibition in New Zealand and was supportive of an enterprise that had an 'artistic' component.[47] He was, according to Laird, 'a great friend to the potters' and an avid collector of pottery.[48]

There was an added incentive to view studio pottery as a beneficial addition to the economic output of the country. The potential to export hand-made pottery had been seen as early as 1963. Eileen Keys was an expatriate New Zealander, living in Australia, and involved in the arts as a potter and an arts advocate and researcher. On a visit to New Zealand in 1963 she compared the development of studio pottery in the two countries. 'Although the art [pottery] had developed tremendously in Australia since the end of World War Two, Mrs Keys did not consider its popularity comparable to that in New Zealand stating '"I can see that New Zealand will become in the future quite important as an exporting country for pottery".'[49] The possibility of pottery exports also appealed to Sutch.

The growing tourism industry was a strength for studio pottery.[50] In an address to the Technical Education Association of New Zealand in 1959, Sutch summed up what he believed the growing number of tourists to New Zealand were looking for and why New Zealand's manufacturers were not meeting the need. 'They [souvenirs] are not indigenous and so long as we think that we

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[45] NZP, 6:1, 1963, p. 26. See also W. B. Sutch, *The Quest for Security in New Zealand 1840 to 1966*, Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. 109 - 110.
[46] Brian Easton, DNZB. Sutch was involved with the Architectural Centre (he was chairman for seven years) and chaired the Festival of Wellington Arts Committee that organised the Industrial Design Exhibition in 1961.
[47] Laird 1998 interview.
[48] Laird 2000 interview.
[49] *Press*, 18 January, 1963, p. 2.
[50] NZOYB, 1957, p. 37. And NZOYB, 1960, p. 58. There had been a 29.8% increase in the number of visitors to New Zealand in the three years between 1956 and 1959.

must manufacture certain things only for the tourist industry so long will we be handicapped in providing something worthwhile for the tourist.'[51] He continued: 'The visitor to our shores wants something of a kind that he cannot get elsewhere; … There must be developed something of unique quality, unique to New Zealand. It could be pottery. A good deal of the pottery produced in New Zealand could well grace the homes of visitors to this country.'[52] In a contrary view, Harry and May Davis believed, however, ' that modern man had sold his everything for money.'[53] Tourism, for them, meant dependence on others.

New Zealand's trading position in the world was changing and the craft community was aware that there was potential for growth. Laird organised a conference called the First Study Conference on the Promotion of Crafts in New Zealand at Massey University College to discuss the changes that were taking place. [54] The conference ran between 29 and 31 August 1963 with 'some' forty conferees attending.[55] The Chairman, Gerald Wakely, in his summation noted that: 'Patterns of trade dictated by politics decree that New Zealand can no longer earn a steady, uncomplicated living as the farm for the land of its forbears on the other side of the globe.'[56] He suggested that 'The remarkable development in pottery in New Zealand over the last ten years should be reflected in our buildings, in New Zealand missions abroad and in overseas offices of New Zealand businesses … .' He also looked to Scandinavia for guidance: 'Sweden is an example of what can happen; the development of craft work there has been a major contributing factor to the valuable export trade of Swedish domestic ware.'[57]

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[51] NZP, 2/2, 1959, p. 3. See also Sutch, *Quest*, pp. 142 - 143.
[52] NZP, 2/2, 1959, p. 3.
[53] Davis interview.
[54] Laird 1998 interview.
[55] National Council of Adult Education (NCAE) 'Proceedings of the First Study-Conference on the Promotion of Crafts in New Zealand', held at Massey University College from 29th – 31st August 1963 under the auspices of The Victoria University Regional Council of Adult Education', Wellington: Potryck Press, 1963, p. 1.
[56] Ibid., p. 30.
[57] Ibid., p. 31.

Ideas about the relationship between the crafts and industry were also raised. Harry Davis was a guest speaker at the conference.[58] Davis was fiercely independent but he was not opposed to adapting modern industrial and economic ideas to support modern craftsmen and he appears to have given tacit support to the ideas Laird was formulating. At the conference he restated his belief that the most important motivating factor for any craftsperson was human fulfilment. Using that as his base value he chided craftspeople who refused to employ others because it involved them complying with factory regulations and inspectors. He continued:

> … the demands of commerce have their place, and in fact that the devices accepted and exploited by commercial concerns should be scrutinized to see if any of them can be exploited to a craftsman's advantage. There are concepts in the world of industry and commerce which strike a shrill note in most craftsmen's ears, but things like "vertical integration,"[59] and "time and motion study" and "cost accounting" can all be made to strengthen a craftsman's economic position provided he remains their master – and incidentally master of himself.[60]

He also warned that the extreme specialisation that was often associated with small-scale craft-based enterprises was a barrier to personal growth and was a sign of 'dilettantetism' [sic] that some 'revivalist' craftspeople demonstrated. He believed that such an attitude would trap them in their narrow field.[61]

The ideas about handcrafted pottery, good design principles and their relationship to industry became a physical reality when Jack and Peggy Laird established Waimea Pottery at Richmond, near Nelson, in 1964. The influence of Scandinavian design was so strong that soon after the workshop was erected the *Nelson Evening Mail* reported that the structure was 'built on the

[58] NCAE Conference, pp. 23 – 27.
[59] Ibid., p. 24. Davis understood vertical integration to mean a business having the greatest possible control of all its processes.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., p. 25. Sutch also warned against overspecialisation - see Sutch, *Quest*, p. 113.

latest Scandinavian pattern.'[62] Waimea Pottery's first apprentice, Royce McGlashen, also noticed the Scandinavian influence: 'Jack Laird began to desire cleaner lines and no throwing marks.'[63] Throwing marks were a feature of the pottery influenced by Leach and this was a dramatic break from the dominant tradition of the movement. At the craft conference Wakely had suggested that using the quality materials of the land in a more productive way was the challenge for craftspeople and called on the community to invest in the craft industry.[64] In Nelson, that investment came through an investment company called the Nelson Industrial Corporation (NIDC) that had recently been established by local businessmen who were concerned that Nelson was stagnating.[65] Waimea Pottery was its first investment, a sign that the movement was being accepted and was being taken seriously as a viable industry.

The Lairds were encouraged to move to Nelson by Doctor Graham Kemble-Welsh, a local medical doctor who was one of the founders of the NIDC, an amateur painter and a attendee to the Conference on the Promotion of Crafts in New Zealand, to see if it would be possible to set up a small country pottery.[66] They were also attracted by the availability of materials and the climate. In addition, Laird had become disillusioned with the adult education programme in Palmerston North. He submitted a plan for a pottery in Nelson to the Department of Industries and Commerce for consideration by Sutch to see if it made 'sound economic sense.'[67] The plan 'was found to be in every way practicable.'[68] Laird's plans for Waimea Pottery represented an example of a small manufacturing business that required a high level of skill from its workers

[62] NEM, 15 October 1964, p. 6.
[63] Royce McGlashen, interviewed by Dr. Damian H. Skinner, 23 November 2000.
[64] NCAE Conference, p. 31.
[65] NEM, 15 October 1964, p. 6. See also NEM, Obituary, 18 September 1981, p. 9. The obituary for one of its founders, Heaton Drake, called the company the Nelson Industrial Promotion Co. Ltd.
[66] NEM, Obituary, 23 October 2004.
[67] NZP, 12:2, 1970, p. 7. See also Margie Pope, 'Jack Laird', Museum Studies Special Topic 67.381, Massey University, 1998, pp. 5 – 6, and Laird 1984 interview.
[68] NEM, 15 October 1964, p. 6.

and that might, one day, grow into an export company and provide items for tourists to buy.

Waimea Pottery employed production methods that were quite different to most New Zealand factories[69] and the structure of the business was far more professional than most other studio potteries.[70] The development of the pottery items produced was 'organic'. Laird may have created the original designs but he found the designs 'modify themselves in practice, and only attain their final settled form after several months of production.' He also noted that: 'The rhythm of throwing a series [of pots] enables the thrower to work to a much greater speed, which is important if the pottery is to manage to survive economically',[71] although he realised 'a lot of people didn't like the idea of what they called commercialisation.'[72] Laird recognised that a dichotomy existed between a commercially viable business and those potters who were not dependent on their craft for a living:

> There was Mirek Smišek, myself, Harry Davis producing domestic ware. Producing it in a country pottery basis. Then there was the socialite group, who had independent means, who were doing it as a sort of cultural pursuit. A hobby. There weren't those sorts of roots in people's need. They despised us.[73]

As Waimea Pottery grew and the number of people employed increased, the Lairds had to cope with marketing, industrial and economic issues that few other studio potteries in New Zealand had encountered before. They employed

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[69] The title of the first article about Waimea Pottery hints that the NEM was unsure if this business was a small cottage industry or a 'normal' business. "Pottery May Become A Richmond Industry", NEM, 15 October 1964, p. 6.
[70] A 1984 survey of the arts and crafts industry in Nelson found that only 2% of those surveyed operated as a company. See S. J. West, and M. C. Brennan, *Economic Impact Study of the Arts and Crafts Industry – Nelson Region*, Nelson Provincial Arts Council, 1985, p. 46.
[71] NZP, 9:1, 1966, p. 33.
[72] Laird 1998 interview.
[73] Ibid. Here Laird is referring to some of New Zealand's most prominent potters, not the members of clubs mentioned in Chapter Two. The dichotomy he mentions is discussed further in Chapter Four.

a travelling salesman, John Gates, who specialised in imported pottery, to market their work in department stores along with his normal merchandise. For the first time, hand-made New Zealand pottery was displayed in shops such as J. Ballantyne and Co. in Christchurch and James Smith in Wellington, alongside Arabia pottery from Finland and Rosenthal pottery from Germany.[74] The work also received praise from a visiting designer of Rosenthal, suggesting that the work was of a very high standard.[75] Overseas approval was still an important benchmark.[76] Laird believed that he was achieving his aim:

> [We] wanted to produce beautiful things that ordinary people could have in their homes and not be self-conscious about it. [We wanted them to] use them every day and [they would be] precious but beautiful. I suppose that's as close as I came to Leach. It was ordinary objects that had a beauty of their own. I called it my aesthetic fifth column. It got into the kitchen and people were absorbing qualities of balance and form and texture and so on and [were] totally unaware of it.[77]

The appearance of Waimea pottery in large department stores encouraged the New Zealand public to start buying and using hand-made pottery in their homes. Moreover, it could also be displayed as 'art work', allowing ordinary people to have art in their homes at a very affordable price. A New Zealander, who might not understand 'art', could understand pottery – it was something that looked attractive, was individually made by hand and could ultimately be used if necessary. Cape called this 'a convenient duality which meant that their [crafts] purpose could be justified on either functional or aesthetic grounds'.[78] And Waimea Pottery was producing them in quantity.

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[74] Laird 1998 interview and Laird 2000 interview.
[75] Laird 2000 interview.
[76] NZP 12:2, 1970 Between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s Crown Lynn stamped some pottery 'British' to boost sales. See Monk, pp. 61 - 62. For a discussion on the belief that most things English were superior see Claudia Bell, *Inventing New Zealand: Everyday Myths of Pakeha Identity*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 22.
[77] Laird 2000 interview.
[78] Cape, *Please Touch*, p. 11.

The other aspect of Waimea Pottery that marked it out as different from other potteries and from the image of potters as individuals working alone, or as a couple, was the number of staff working there. By 1970, having employed between fourteen and seventeen staff,[79] the Lairds decided that the enterprise had reached its optimum size. They found that while they were able to sell all they could produce they also needed to be aware of their costs, particularly labour, and remain true to the guiding philosophy of the enterprise. The Lairds established a separate division called Mapua Tableware to meet the demand by using machinery rather than throwers[80] and the company began exporting to Australia. Waimea Pottery remained a separate country style pottery making pottery by hand while Mapua Tableware took advantage of the demand for 'handmade-like' pottery.

Controls on labour were as rigid as those on many other areas of the economy. The skilled potters at Waimea were difficult to classify for the purpose of wage setting. The investigating officer for the Remuneration Authority advised the Authority that the union that the workers came under, the Wellington, Nelson, Westland and Marlborough Local Bodies, Other Labourers and Related Trades Industrial Union of Workers, did not understand the studio pottery industry well enough to classify Waimea's staff.[81] In fact, the Union had been unable to classify the staff from the time of the first industrial agreement, describing it as 'very much a "hit and miss" affair'. The Lairds were unable to help – 'The employer knew very little about industrial matters.'[82] Nevertheless, Laird was astute enough to realise that wages were one of their biggest costs and that he needed to keep them at a level that would not make the business uncompetitive. Laird explained to the Union 'that when he first began the

[79] NZP 12:2, 1970, p. 7 states seventeen, whereas Laird 2000 interview states fourteen.
[80] Warren, p. 17.
[81] Waimea Craft Pottery Workers' Industrial Agreement, 1972, Archives New Zealand, Te Rua Mahara o te Kawanatanga, L, W2699, 37/4/2374, Part 1, p. 1. Note: The Union did understand the broader clay related industries – pipe and tile making and machine produced pottery.
[82] Ibid.

business there were six other small “backyard” Potteries but there are now [1972] over 120 and the competition is very fierce and he therefore, will not be increasing his prices as a result of this wage increase.’[83] Waimea Pottery was squeezed between concerns about an inability to supply an almost insatiable demand for pottery, maintaining a growing workforce to meet that demand and a desire to remain true to the country pottery ideal.

Other potters in Nelson benefited from the sympathetic economic environment. Chris du Fresne began earning all his income from pottery in 1962 and stated that he ‘could sell anything that was of clay.’[84] But the pressure of meeting the demand without the structure the Lairds had developed began to take a toll. Orders rolled in and he was booked up for two years. ‘All the fun had gone out of it because I couldn’t go out into the pottery and say – what will I do today?’[85] Although he broke with some traditional studio pottery methods and increased his production by using the semi-industrial slip-casting technique[86] he could not keep up and stopped taking orders.[87]

Those who joined the clubs also benefited from the growing demand for hand-made pottery. Many of the people who became club members had no expectation that their interest was anything other than a hobby: ‘When I started it never occurred to me that I would sell anything I made.’[88] For some club members the ability to sell their work was an endorsement of the level of skill they had reached and that they were heading in the right direction. Cape described the buying of New Zealand craft by New Zealanders as ‘the acceptance of indigenous workmanship’,[89] but the ability to sell, sometimes quite crude pottery, may have reflected the huge public demand. Other club

[83] Ibid.
[84] du Fresne interview.
[85] Ibid.
[86] See Chapter One.
[87] du Fresne interview.
[88] Woodhead interview.
[89] Cape, *Please Touch*, p. 11.

members, by their own reaction, did not believe that the buying of pottery by the public necessarily provided them with the qualifications to take their interest any further than the hobby stage. Sadie Sharpin reacted to the sale of one of her pieces with astonishment: 'I can still remember being absolutely amazed … that someone actually bought this [pottery]. I thought it was a funny little salt pig I had made. I couldn't believe that anyone would buy it.'[90]

The members of pottery clubs in Nelson in the early 1970s should not have been surprised at the level of sales, which had been increasing spectacularly since the early 1960s. The five women who made up the Hillsborough Group in Christchurch in the early 1960s were easily able to cover their costs. Their attitude to the sale of their work, however, suggests both guilt at the ease with which they were able to sell the pottery and concern about the corrosive effect it might have.

> We have paid our bills by developing a 'bread and butter line' of small dishes; we expect New Zealand to reach saturation point in this direction, but so far this has not happened. As long as we are firm and decline to make more than a certain number this is fine, but so steady is the demand that it has not been easy to meet it and leave enough time over for the more interesting pots we all long to produce – and the making of which is our reason for existence as a group.[91]

Individuals who were supportive of the movement were also expressing concerns at the ease with which almost any potter could sell work at this time. At the opening of the seventh New Zealand Potters exhibition in 1963 Sutch warned: 'A strong but relatively unselective public demand has been created for New Zealand pottery, … . Poor work has sold as well as good putting temptation in the way of experienced, and encouraging beginners to believe that their work is of good quality when it is still, so to speak, half-baked.'[92]

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[90] Sadie Sharpin in Harvey and Sharpin interview.
[91] Jean L. Morland, 'The Hillsborough Group', in NZP, 3:1, 1960, p. 41.
[92] NZP, 6:2, 1963, p. 45.

Some professional potters were also concerned about the competition that was being created by the clubs and classes, and they did not place all the blame on the students. Stephen Carter complained:

> Because there were quite a few tutors out there … [it] became a bit of a battle really… I think we were cutting our own throats as potters doing this adult education … there was (sic) so many potters working from home now. They didn't have to make a profit. There were women who were probably in their forties … whose kids had left home and they had a bit of time and bit of money and they bought a wheel and they bought a kiln and they were able to make their pots and the husband probably working and making a good income and they were able to make these and sell them. Not necessarily good quality but to … the established potters' detriment.[93]

Nevertheless, many club members in Nelson were encouraged by the public demand for hand-made pottery. Selling their work not only subsidised the costs involved but had the potential to earn them a good profit: 'Some people thought that this was a way we can make some money on a hobby.'[94] In Chapter One we saw that price became a metaphor for humbleness for those who aligned themselves with the Japanese pottery traditions and in Chapter Two earthenware a metaphor for a lower quality of pottery or lack of knowledge. In turn, for some club members, sales became a metaphor for achievement, success and the attainment of a level of skill.

More advanced club members were also surprised at the level of interest in pottery by the buying public and felt ambivalent about what it meant. June Reay, who later became a professional potter, was astonished by the amount of pottery that was being purchased by the pottery shops that were proliferating across the country:

> We used to put all these pots out in the shed. [A shop owner's] husband used to fly his huge plane down. Load it up. … She would just more or less buy everything. Shocking when you think of it. … Thousands and

[93] Carter interview.
[94] Hands interview.

> thousands and thousands of dollars worth. And I'm not talking a little wee plane. I'm talking a big plane. … I suppose we suddenly all got on the bandwagon.[95]

The potters who were developing into professionals could make more money by selling directly to the public but their increased productivity forced them to begin wholesaling: '… you can make a thousand coffee mugs but you've got to get rid of nine hundred and ninety-nine of them.'[96]

Bill and Nancy's Malcolm's surprise, and delight, at the ease with which potters were able to make a living was not a reaction that was widespread. Many potters in Nelson did not attempt to analyse the reasons for their financial success in any depth. But phrases such as 'government protection' and 'an acceptance by the general public'[97] indicate that they knew that economic conditions existed that created an ideal opportunity for many of them to take their hobby and create a small business from it. Professionals were also aware that they existed in a privileged position: 'Imported pots were not permitted at all – that's why there's been this industrial growth earlier on'.[98] But they may not have been aware of why there was so little competition for their pottery. In the case of Waimea Pottery, the business was, for some in positions of influence, a model for how New Zealand might deal with the problems associated with a tightly controlled economy, heavily dependent on primary produce, and the need to restrict imported industrial products. The studio pottery movement in Nelson between 1956 and 1976 was not a primary target of government policy, but it benefited from policies designed to protect the New Zealand economy and the New Zealand people by using protective economic measures.

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[95] Reay interview.
[96] Wilkinson interview.
[97] Heatherbell interview, see Chapter Two.
[98] McGlashen interview. For a different view to this refer to note 122 in Chapter One where Neil Grant speaks about the St Ives pottery available in shops.

Chapter Four

Standing our Ground: Maintaining a Standard

> Sir. – Hand-made pottery standards in New Zealand are high and the pottery movement's good reputation at home and overseas has been gained and guarded by unremitting insistence upon careful selection for public exhibitions. The editorial committee of the "New Zealand Potter" proposed the formation of a National [New Zealand] Society of Potters with the object of continuing the guardianship of high standards of design and craftsmanship through exhibitions and the "New Zealand Potter" and other activities, e.g., lectures and schools. At the inaugural meeting held in Wellington on June 15 mediocrity won the day when associates – "those interested in" – took over the new society after amending the proposed objects in order to eliminate all reference to high standards. Potters worthy of the name should disassociate themselves absolutely from the new society and build an association, which places first the ideals of the craft, the highest standards in professional practise and, incidentally, the good name of New Zealand arts. – Yours, etc.
>
> PAUL BEADLE
> Auckland August 27 1963[1]

Paul Beadle's letter to the editor of the *Press* raised three important issues that will be the focus of this chapter. At one level it recognised that New Zealand had a growing reputation for producing good quality hand-made pottery. On a second level it implied that not all the people who were taking up the craft, and who were sometimes earning income from pottery, would necessarily be interested in the aesthetic values of the craft or had sufficient skills to produce high quality work. Finally it acknowledged that some kind of selection procedures for pottery exhibitions was necessary to maintain high standards, that the process would need to have an organisation to administer it and to exclude those who did not have an interest in maintaining high standards. The letter clearly felt that the National [New Zealand] Society of Potters had not made a good start. What was not clear from the letter, however, was who had the authority to set the 'standards' that potters should aspire to, or how those 'standards' would be controlled.

[1] *Press*, 30 August 1963, p. 3.

This chapter will discuss the desire to set 'standards' and control the studio pottery movement. It will examine the formation of the New Zealand Society of Potters (NZSP) and its attempts to exclude the increasing numbers of potters who wished to become members or, if they did become members, to limit their collective influence. It will outline the struggle between maintaining 'standards' and ensuring financial viability that the new national organisation faced. The chapter will also examine how a second generation of professional potters felt restrained by earlier conventions. Events that took place at the national level will dominate the discussion. In Nelson a small number of potters were directly involved with national organisations while others, often busy earning a living, took no part, and many amateurs had no aspirations to national recognition at all. Nevertheless, the political manoeuvrings that played out at the national level eventually impacted on the increasing numbers of professional potters in Nelson – many of whom supplied the pottery that Austin Davies needed for his exhibition and sale at the Suter Art Gallery in 1976.

In the early 1950s concerns about the standard of the pottery seen in shops and galleries were centred on the cultural impact of pottery from abroad. Arbiters of taste in New Zealand, such as Marion and R. N. Field,[2] were critical of the examples of pottery New Zealanders were exposed to: ' … with few exceptions New Zealand homes are jollied up with those prostitutions of pottery known as "Art Pottery," mainly imported from firms abroad, which can have little or no sense of responsibility towards the growth of culture here'.[3] The Fields were convinced that it was 'the individual potter who sets the highest standard of taste, and it is his influence … that have a refreshing effect on industrial

[2] Anna K. C Petersen, 'Field, Robert Nettleton 1899 - 1987'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 April 2006, URL: http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/ Field was an enthusiastic supporter of studio pottery. See also NZP, 19:2, 1977, pp. 18 – 19.
[3] Marion Field and F. N. Field, 'Studio Pottery', *Year Book of the Arts in New Zealand*, 1949, n.5, p. 91.

pottery; …'[4] According to the Fields, the main impact studio potters could have was to stimulate 'a better standard of taste in mass produced articles'.[5]

Those who wished to control the studio pottery movement needed a structure to operate in. They also had to set the 'standards' for pottery in art as well as industry if the Fields' predictions were to be realised. The national exhibitions, organised by the pioneers of studio pottery in New Zealand, lead to the formation of the NZSP and became the means by which new potters could be included or excluded from participation at the national level. Prior to this experts in painting and sculpture had carried out the critique of studio pottery in New Zealand. Their framework was set within a tradition of Western art forms that ordained 'that coloured pigment on canvas is more significant … than an object created out of clay and glazes.'[6] Judgements made by art critics were often poorly informed and patronising. A similar development had taken place overseas as the volume of hand-made pottery increased. Traditional crafts and methods were beginning to be analysed by an urbane audience that had previously shown little, or no interest.[7]

In Britain Bernard Leach, through his influential book, was establishing a new framework of standards in studio pottery. Leach's influence dominated the studio pottery movement in New Zealand, and the setting and maintaining of standards was often dictated by potters' connections to the Leach mystique and the period at which an individual became involved with the movement. Mirek Smišek was one amongst a small number of potters who established their position within the movement through their early uptake of the craft. In Nelson, Smišek's right to set the standards for hand-made pottery was not questioned, in part because there was no one with the qualifications and

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., p. 92.
[6] Peter Beatson and Beatson Dianne, *The Arts in Aotearoa New Zealand. Themes and Issues,* Palmerston North: Massey University, 1994, p. 29.
[7] Murray Fieldhouse, *Pottery*, London: W. & G. Foyle, 1952, p. 7.

authority to do so, and because Smišek's credentials through the Leach connection were so robust. It was these pioneers of the movement who produced New Zealand's first pottery magazine and founded the first national organisation of studio potters.

The first *New Zealand Potter* (NZP) magazine was published in August 1958[8] as a means of funding the Second New Zealand Potters' Exhibition and to keep potters informed about what was going on.[9] It became the focus of the movement and the vehicle through which a small group attempted to control it. The group consisted of Helen Mason, who had editing experience through the *New Zealand Listener*, Dr Terry Barrow, an anthropologist with experience of scientific publishing, Doreen Blumhardt, experienced in layout and design, and a fourth member, Lee Thomson, responsible for advertising.[10] For the first seven years of the magazine the editorial committee was 'nearly swamped by the burden of administration' and so the 'founding of the NZSP in 1965 was a great relief',[11] as it removed some of the responsibility for providing a national focus for the movement. The NZSP was formed 'to safeguard the common interest'.[12]

The Anglo-Oriental tradition that was such a strong influence in the early stages was immediately apparent in the magazine. In the first issue many articles connected the early potters to Leach or referred to the dichotomy that existed between the eastern traditions of the craft and the British background of many of the practitioners in New Zealand. Pages 17 – 21 were devoted to

[8] Heather Stirling, 'A History of the Development of the New Zealand Studio Potters Movement as Reflected in the New Zealand Potter Magazine', Special Study, Brighton Polytechnic, 1979, p. 5.
[9] Helen Mason, *Helen Mason's Scrapbook: Fifty Years as a Backyard Potter, A Memoir*, 2nd ed., Waipukurau: Limited Editions, 2005, p. 8.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

photographs and an article about Shōji Hamada.[13] A review of Helen Mason's exhibition in Wellington by T. B.[14] stated that 'Helen Mason accepts the fact that she is a New Zealander, which means she realises that our society is rooted in English life and custom'. He added, in a statement that reflected the awareness of the dominant role Japanese pottery played, that 'unlike most European countries and America, we can look to the Far East for inspiration without danger of suffocation.'[15] Very few potters of the late 1950s were earning a living from the craft but the articles referred to their professional ambitions. Len Castle, an Auckland teacher, was reported as sharing his knowledge after fourteen months at the 'Leach Pottery'. Following this 'apprenticeship' he returned to his old job as a teacher of Science at Auckland Grammar School.[16] Smišek was said to be 'taking the big step of setting up on his own as a potter'.[17] Peter Stichbury, another teacher and the '… holder of the Fellowship Award of the Association of New Zealand Art Societies, … was touring Europe … after nine worthwhile months at the Leach Pottery.'[18] All the potters mentioned later became dominant figures in the movement.

The idea of a 'Potters' Guild' appeared in the NZP in December 1962. The editor of the NZP, Helen Mason, proposed the following guidelines for membership:

> We feel that if we are ever to achieve worthwhile standards we must form an association in which the serious potters provide the core. A possible solution would be to form a Potters' Guild which the 58 people who have exhibited twice or more in New Zealand Potters' Exhibitions would be invited to join. Those 43 people who have exhibited once only could be given the opportunity of coming into the original group if they have work accepted in the Seventh Exhibition in 1963. From then on we

[13] Dr T. Barrow, 'Shoji Hamada', NZP, 1:1, 1958, pp. 17 – 21. Barrow read about Hamada in *A Potter's Book* and met his son Atsuya in 1957 at St Ives.
[14] Presumed to be Dr Barrow.
[15] NZP, 1:1, 1958, p. 26.
[16] Ibid., p. 12.
[17] Ibid. The article points out that Smišek was teaching five pottery classes, See Chapters One and Two.
[18] Ibid., pp. 14 – 15.

> feel that new potters wishing to exhibit will have to apply for membership, acceptance only being given on a reasonably high standard of work.[19]

A draft constitution was presented at the meeting that established the NZSP in Wellington on the 15 June 1963. Funds were an important issue from the beginning - only those who had paid their ten shillings subscription to the NZP were eligible to vote.[20] Three membership groups were suggested. First, foundation members would consist of potters who had exhibited 'in two or more Annual New Zealand Potters' Exhibitions up to and including the Seventh (1963) Exhibition'.[21] Second 'Ordinary Exhibiting Members: i.e. an Associate Member who has had accepted an adequate number of pots at one Exhibition commencing with the Eighth (1964) Exhibition.'[22] Third was the group that Paul Beadle, in his letter to the Editor at the beginning of this chapter, took exception to: 'Associate Members, i.e. All people interested in pottery who wish to join the Society.'[23] In the draft constitution the associate members would have no exhibiting or voting rights. What appeared to be a democratic organisation necessitated by the small number of potters in New Zealand was in fact hierarchical and members had more or less power depending on when they had started exhibiting. Only the original fifty-eight potters referred to above met the criteria - three of them had links to Nelson. Jack Laird, who set up Waimea Pottery in Nelson in 1964, was one of them. Laird was elected onto the Council of the Society,[24] but because Nelson did not have a regional organisation affiliated to the NZSP, he did not represent Nelson.

Four months later, in what seems to be a measure to boost membership, a motion was put forward at the first Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at the

[19] NZP, 5:2, 1962, p. 56.
[20] NZP, 6:1, 1963, p. 44.
[21] Ibid., p. 41.
[22] Ibid., p. 42.
[23] Ibid.
[24] NZP, 6:2, 1963, p. 78.

Otago Museum on the 6 October 1963. Under 'General Business: Additional Members'[25], Roy Cowan and Juliet Peter moved and seconded 'that notwithstanding the provisions relating to membership qualification, those persons who had work accepted for the first time in the 7th N.Z Potters Exhibition, should be invited to join the Society.' The motion was carried.[26]

The linking of membership of the NZSP to exhibitions became a feature of the Society but there were no rules within the constitution to give guidance to those carrying out the selection of work for exhibitions. [27] This became the battleground on which disputes about membership were fought. Foundation members had an advantage over other members because they were not required to go though such a rigorous initial selection process as later members. In addition, their original selection as exhibitors had not been part of a qualification for membership of a potentially influential organisation for potters. Both categories of exhibiting membership also had an advantage over associate members as the following instruction for exhibiting rights implies: 'Associate members have the right to submit pots for selection … but must send return freight. Only if an adequate number of pots are selected will any of their work be exhibited.'[28] Exhibiting members did not have to pay return freight directly – it was deducted from sales - and they were not required to have an 'adequate' number of pots selected to achieve exhibiting status.

The hopes of the foundation and exhibiting members were expressed in an analysis of the constitution: 'The proposed constitution was framed to produce a society of working potters who had satisfied a test of attainment…'[29] The selection procedure was described 'as a liberal policy of admission when

[25] New Zealand Society of Potters Minute Book, MS-Group-0203, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), October, 1963. See also NZP, 19:1, p. 6.
[26] Ibid.
[27] NZP, 19:1, 1977, p. 6.
[28] NZP, 6:1, 1963, p. 42.
[29] Ibid., p. 46. See also NZP 6:2, 1963, p. 77.

compared to the usual art society rules'.[30] However, a proposal to give associate members the same voting rights as foundation and exhibiting members caused the latter group to fear that control of the NZSP would pass out of the hands of 'working' potters and would rest with associate members who comprised 'non-potters, student potters and other potters whose work has not been accepted for exhibition.'[31] The tight control on selection was justified in terms of standards:

> The pottery movement in New Zealand has a good reputation, which has been carefully built up by unremitting insistence upon standards. This esteem could easily be dissipated if a national potters' association allowed work of inferior craftsmanship and design to appear at any exhibition under its sponsorship. Should this happen, with consequent loss of public interest and confidence, the result could be serious to the pottery movement.[32]

Helen Mason was concerned that the proposal had the potential to be used in unscrupulous ways: 'The proposed constitution makes easy politics for anyone who offers easier access to the Annual Exhibition (in return for office) …'.[33] The feared takeover by associate members was blocked by a resolution moved by Doreen Blumhardt: 'That the Council [the governing body] of the Society consist of seven members, at least four of whom must be exhibiting members'.[34] Later this rule would be tested when members stopped exhibiting but wished to remain on the council. At the 1974 AGM it was suggested that these members should be moved to the associate membership category.[35]

James Mack, a well-known art critic, raised the issue of standards when he described the work displayed at the 1968 Eleventh National Exhibition as 'mediocre to poor' and placed the blame firmly with the NZSP 'who … haven't

[30] NZP 6:1, 1963, p. 46.
[31] Ibid., p. 47.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., p. 2.
[34] Ibid., p. 45.
[35] NZSP AGM, 1974, MS-Group-0203, ATL.

been strict enough with their exhibiting membership'.[36] In what appears to be a reaction to this criticism, selection for the Twelfth National Exhibition in 1969 was 'rigorous' with 400 pieces being rejected from the 618 submitted.[37] The result was an exhibition that Tom Esplin, a Senior Lecturer in Design at University of Otago, praised as 'one of the best displays of New Zealand pottery ever presented'.[38] In a plea to the potters who had not submitted work and who had dismissed the NZSP as an amateur organisation he wrote: 'It is to be hoped that the goodwill and standing established by this exhibition will encourage any who felt critical of previous exhibitions and make them aware that not to be represented on such an occasion is to be short-sighted'.[39] Nevertheless, as Juliet Peter's 1977 cartoon (Figure VI) shows, selection continued to be a contentious issue for many years after the exhibition.

[36] NZP, 10:1, 1968, p. 7.
[37] NZP, 11:1, 1969, p. 34.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

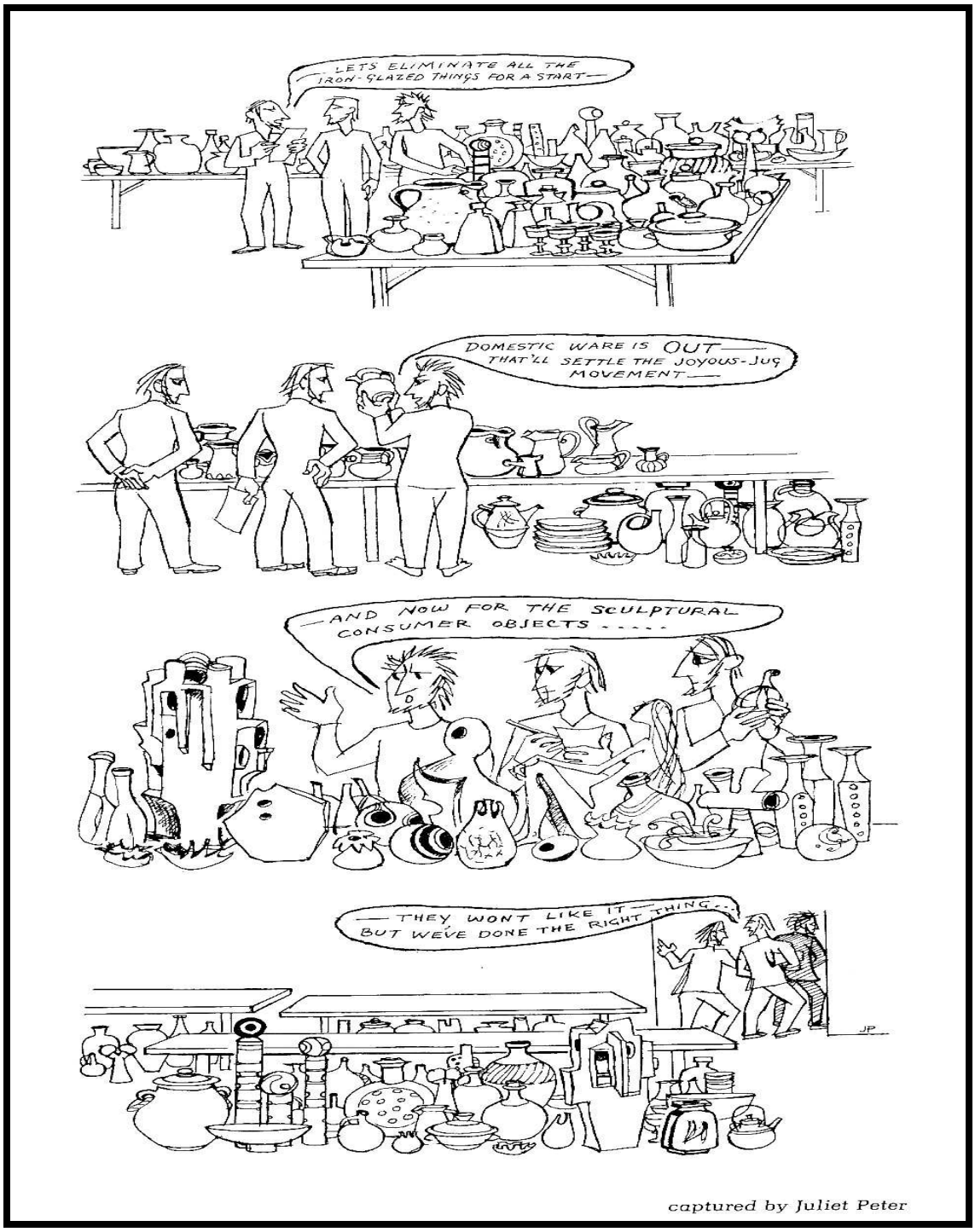

Figure VI. Selection for exhibitions became more rigorous when the New Zealand Society of Potters came under criticism for not protecting ‘standards’. NZP, 19:1, 1977, p. 7.

By 1970 the NZSP was still trying to balance standards and finances. The Society wanted to maintain its standards through a hierarchical membership structure but it also wanted to increase its membership base by bringing in the large number of amateur potters in the regions – although without voting rights. It was a clear sign that the Society needed more members to increase its financial base. To quieten the rumblings amongst the professionals, a remit was placed on the floor at the AGM of the NZSP, held on the 31 March 1970 in Palmerston North, to increase the membership to four categories.[40] The purpose of the remit was to create an elite category of 'Master potters who are nominated and elected at a postal ballot by an 80% majority of votes from exhibiting members.'[41] Whilst the motion was lost it indicated that the society continued to struggle to obtain a level of membership that would make it financially sound while retaining separation between 'working' potters and amateurs. There were 92 members in 1963[42] and the number had increased to only 152 by 1971.[43] The pressure from professional potters continued. The NZP reported that there was 'a strong plea … for a change of emphasis within the Society to lay greater stress on the work of "professional potters". Some professional potters even want a separate association to promote their interests.'[44]

The issue came to a head following the Thirteenth National Exhibition of the NZSP held in 1970 in Auckland. For the first time a sole selector was given the task of choosing what would be displayed - previously a new panel of selectors had been appointed each year to undertake the task – and this was the first overseas selector. Ivan McMeekin, an Australian potter, selected an exhibition 'of widely varying standard[s]', explaining 'that, coming from outside, he did not

[40] NZSP Minute Book, March 1970, p. 2.
[41] Ibid.
[42] NZP, 6:2, 1963, pp. 78 – 79.
[43] NZSP Annual Report 1971. The report stated that over one third of the membership was not financial.
[44] NZP, 12:1, 1970, p. 1 and p. 28.

feel able to impose a standard.'[45] Furthermore, he stated that 'my basic idea was to select pots which represented the work of the society.'[46] This degree of democracy was unacceptable to some potters and a number of professional potters felt that the *raison d'être* for the NZSP had been compromised. Many appeared to have departed before the AGM. The selection of work that the professionals felt had compromised their standards also opened the door for more potters to apply for exhibiting membership – whether they were professional, semi-professional or amateur. It appeared that one selector or selection based on a more liberal interpretation of standards could influence membership. Roy Cowan, in summing up the problem clearly placed the blame with the professionals:

> Over the years, a number of the full-time potters have joined the N. Z. Society, and they have been well represented as selectors and exhibitors. Of their own choice, however, they have never been represented as office-holders, and it was a quite characteristic situation, that, after some had indicated their misgivings [and] … they went off, and the Annual General Meeting, the place where the steering wheel of the Society may be turned, and where the jobs are handed out, remained, as usual, the province of the dedicated amateur.[47]

The gulf between professional potters and amateurs, or the full-timers and the part-timers, widened. The debate between those favouring exclusivity and those supporting more democratic membership rules in the NZSP, was often linked to commercial aspects of pottery. The professional / full-timers were becoming concerned about the quantity of work that amateurs / part-timers were releasing onto the market while the latter group were concerned that 'the "commercially" produced work of group potteries such as Waimea and Crewenna' were threatening the 'quality' of 'artistic' standards.[48] The founding of the New Zealand Potters' Guild (NZPG) on 10 October 1970 at Victoria

[45] Ibid., p. 28.
[46] Ibid., p. 39.
[47] Ibid., p. 28.
[48] Cape, *Please Touch*, pp. 80 – 81.

University, as an organisation specifically for full-time, professional potters, encouraged the schism.[49]

The NZPG, from the start, appeared to have a very similar organisational structure and aims to the NZSP and it quickly became evident that they needed the part-timers as much as the NZSP did. The Guild organised a residential school at Waimea Pottery in January 1972, but it was clear from the range of attendees that it would cater for non-professionals as well: 'No standards were set for entry so this course was available to beginners, and appealed to people from widely differing backgrounds including several young men and a nun'.[50] When the NZPG folded in 1972, potters, both professionals and amateurs, were being threatened by the proposed lifting of import restrictions on ceramics and there was a need for all potters to combine to fight it.[51]

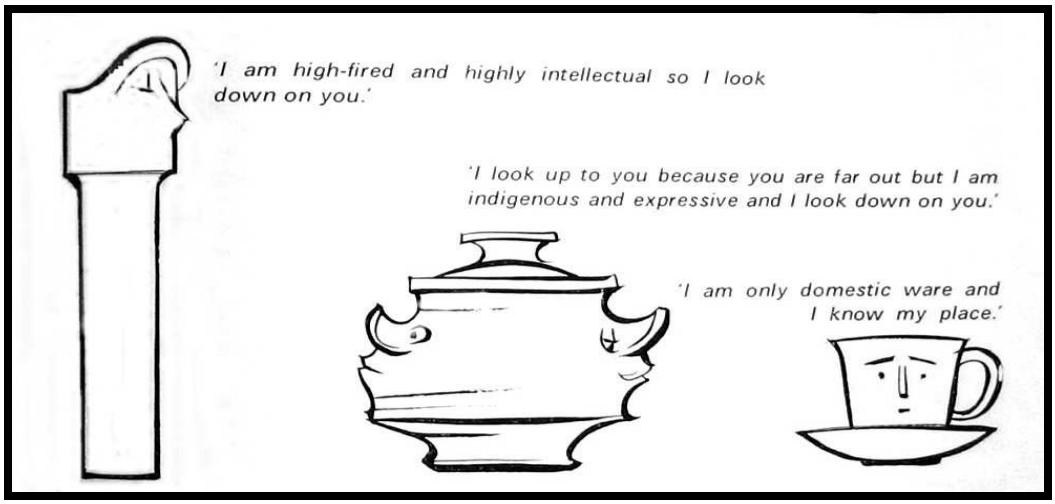

Figure VII. Some ceramic work carried more status than others. NZP, 12:1, 1970, p. 33.

As we have seen from the reaction of some of New Zealand's best-known potters to the establishment of Waimea Pottery, the definitions of 'professional', 'full-time' and 'amateur' varied greatly. Jack Laird was clearly a professional but

[49] Peter Cape, 'Pots and Potters', *New Zealand's Heritage: The Making of a Nation*, Vol. 21, Auckland: Hamlyn House, 1978, p. 2821. See also NZP, 13:1, 1971, p. 37.
[50] NZP, 14:1, 1972, p. 46.
[51] Cape, *Please Touch*, p. 81. See also NZSP Annual Report 1971.

many of the people who became members of the NZSP as foundation members did not earn a majority of their income from pottery or, in fact, were dependant on any income from the craft. Also, it was not clear what type of potter the NZSP was set up to represent and there was feeling that some work carried more prestige, as can be seen from Figure VII. The type of work that would be accepted for national exhibitions was critically important for the NZSP if it was to be taken seriously by the rest of the art world. Most full-time potters who depended on pottery for their income concentrated on domestic ware, and exhibitions were the place to raise one's profile nationally. National exhibitions, however, became irrelevant for many potters because sales of pottery in New Zealand were increasing rapidly and promotion of domestic pottery was not needed. Often sculptural pieces[52] were considered more 'arty' and therefore more prestigious. Potters who did not depend on pottery for their living could afford to submit sculptural works that were more difficult to sell but had a higher status.

The NZSP had tried to gauge the feelings of many of the most well known potters of the time to the professional versus amateur debate. Barry Brickell was firm in defining a professional: '[it is] based ENTIRELY on manner of income', but then made allowance for potters who taught and received a tuition fee.[53] Wilf Wright advanced a wide definition: 'A professional potter is one who earns his basic living from pottery'. He then, as if considering potters in their first year full-time, qualified his statement by saying: 'Perhaps making a living for a certain number of years or at any rate proof that the potter has established himself'.[54] Peter Stitchbury recognised that the term professional was difficult to define and suggested that any new association of professionals would be no more effective than the NZSP: 'Personally I think there would be such a wide range of different people eligible to join an organisation, that many would not

[52] NZSP Annual Report 1969.
[53] NZP, 12:1, 1970, pp. 29 - 30.
[54] Ibid. p. 30.

want to join – because of standards perhaps. (This happened in England in 1958.)'[55] Harry Davis thought it was 'irrelevant if a potter is a member of a professional association or not. What matters is whether he makes good pots, …'[56] With such a wide variety of opinions, and professional potters reluctant to undertake the administration work within any association, it is not surprising that the NZPG had a short, and largely unrecorded, existence.

In the meantime the NZSP continued to struggle with the financial restraints and administrative deficiencies that a small exclusive membership imposed on it. The NZSP set up a regional group membership category as a way of raising additional funds and to assist with exhibition organisation.[57] The 1971 Annual Report referred to the new 'Regional Group Membership allowing regions with sufficient numerical strength to become affiliated members – without voting right.'[58] Nelson was not an affiliated region because the 100 minimum membership qualification was too high. Some regions treated the move cynically. The levy was 50 cents per member and three of the four regions that had paid their fees paid exactly for one hundred members – the minimum number. The President of the NZSP, John Fuller, could not decide 'whether this is coincidence, connivence [sic] or confusion.'[59] By 1973 it was recognised by the NZSP members who attended the AGM that smaller regions, like Nelson, might never have sufficient numbers to meet the affiliate membership criteria. Nelson had a growing reputation as a centre of pottery but a small population and, as a result, had not been given the opportunity to hold the NZSP National Exhibition. In its search for funds and people to run exhibitions in the regions it was suggested that the NZSP invite small groups to apply for membership 'and

[55] Ibid. p. 31.
[56] Ibid. p. 32.
[57] NZP, 19:1, 1977, p. 6.
[58] NZSP Annual Report 1971.
[59] Ibid.

their cases would be judged on merit.'[60] A change to the constitution was required.[61]

By the early 1970s the task of selecting work for exhibitions, and thus the right for potters to call themselves exhibiting members, had becoming time consuming and expensive. In 1971 it was becoming clear that with the increasing number of potters wishing to join the Society the burden of packing and repacking pots that had arrived for selection was becoming too great. In 1973, at Invercargill, application fees had not met those costs.[62] The NZSP amended its rules to allow for prospective members to have their works 'accepted by selection at an Exhibition nominated by the Society.'[63] Instead of two different selectors carrying out the work each year it was suggested that one selector could do the selecting over two years. While this was mooted 'for the sake of the continuity of standards' it had the added advantage that 'it would not be necessary to draw on selectors from so great a distance.'[64] Potters also complained that they were not getting good value for their money: 'one of the stipulations in paying fees to the selectors is that they give a written critical appraisal of the applicants [sic] work.'[65]

As the NZSP became more established and some foundation members began to exhibit less, or not at all, the Society searched for ways to deal with those who occasionally submitted work of an inferior quality and/or retained their founding membership status but no longer exhibited. A suggestion at a meeting of the Executive Council was that exhibiting members 'who had been asked to resubmit to selection for membership, but had not responded to the request,

[60] NZSP, AGM Minutes, 21 October 1973.
[61] Ibid.
[62] NZSP, AGM Minutes, 21 October 1973.
[63] NZP, 13:1, 1971, p. 26.
[64] NZSP, AGM Minutes, 21 October 1973.
[65] Ibid.

would be deemed to have resigned.'[66] It was a sign that within seven years a membership system that suited a small group of semi–professional potters had not adapted sufficiently to cater for the large growth in the movement. The next generation of potters were, in the true definition of professional, more likely to be earning a large part, or all of their income from pottery.[67] They felt blocked from representation on the national organisation by an earlier generation who, in some cases, had never been truly professional and, as time went on, no longer exhibited – or had become stale and conservative. In Nelson this second generation was growing very quickly because of the young potters coming out of Waimea and Crewenna.

Paul Melser, one of the new generation of professional potters, unleashed an acerbic diatribe titled 'Roll on Revolution' in a four-page article in the spring issue of the 1972 NZP.[68] It was somewhat ironic that the attack was launched on the founding members of the movement – the same people that R. N. Field had hoped would save New Zealanders from the ghastliness of imported pottery in 1949. Melser's attack indicated that he believed that the importers had won:

> Pottery in New Zealand is in a bad way. The Pottery Movement has ground to a halt. Our potters have grown old, tired, entrenched and conservative. So called standards have been established which are inflexibly based on imported bourgeois and industrial values and the drive to establish a new and unique tradition has been thwarted by conformism and arrogance.[69]

The reason for this was the selection of pottery for exhibitions and the associated prestige this gave:

> Having one's pots, accepted for exhibition, thus gaining the publicity and tumultuous praise at the opening, became an essential prerequisite for professional success. Since the pots had to be approved by a selection

[66] Ibid.
[67] NZP, 15:1, 1973, p. 42.
[68] Paul Melser, 'Roll on Revolution' NZP, 14:2, 1972, pp. 13 – 16.
[69] Ibid., p. 13.

> panel, and since there were often too many pots submitted for exhibition, there was a tendency for pots to be made for approval – if not by the judges, then at least by one's cohorts.[70]

In addition, he claimed that this had tainted the public's understanding of pottery: 'Since these exhibitions … were … serious and successful publicity manoeuvres, they had a substantial effect on public taste. Now after 15 years of education, public taste is no longer just ignorant. It is bigoted.'[71] Melser placed the blame squarely with the founding potters:

> Most of the responsibility for the stagnation in quality of both the work and the buyer lies with our group of "master potters". The elevated position of these "masters" has been earned not so much by the quality of their work, as by the length of service. Our "master" potters accepted without question a wide range of values that do not necessarily have any validity in this country, then imposed these on the public and the second generation of potters by setting standards.[72]

His attacks on both the NZSP and the NZPG were equally acerbic:

> It [NZSP] has been virtually deserted by most (sic) the more serious of our professionals; it represents amateurs and is run by administrators. [The] New Zealand Potters (sic) Guild, supposedly made up of pure professionals, is in a similar predicament. Apart from the object of protecting and furthering their own interests as an elite … the group shows its lack of purpose in its exhibitions.[73]

It is difficult to know how extensive the discontent was, but one anonymous letter to the editor of the next issue of the NZP concurred with Melser saying that his article echoed 'many points we have thought of for some time, but [it was] not for us as comparative newcomers to say.'[74]

Juliet Peter, one of the early potters that Melser raged against, was not prepared to accept his criticism unchallenged. In an article specifically written to

[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., p. 14.
[73] Ibid., pp. 15 - 16.
[74] AVJL, NZP, 15:1, 1973, p. 19.

confront ‘Roll on Revolution’, Peter questioned Melser’s claim that the founding potters ‘could do exactly what they wanted.’[75] She stated that ‘They are limited to doing exactly what their knowledge, or lack of it, will permit … This was the position of the first generation of potters.’[76] She also claimed that ‘Those who came up through the knocks and buffets of experience are, on the whole, less likely to be “arrogant” than later comers, who are in the position to stand on the shoulders of the original potters …’[77] Peter concluded her defence of the founders by questioning Melser’s understanding of the term ‘master’ potter and, in a reflection of the growing feminist movement, chiding him for his sexist attitudes:

> Now to Master Potters. Very dirty words, these. But there is some confusion about the origin of the tem. Is Master Potter a degree, conferred in secret by some anonymous “they”? Can it be that some potters are more unequal than others? Does it mean a Lodge of Ceramic Brethren, conniving together for their own selfish ends? Or is it a visitation, liable to happen to anybody too diligent at their craft? It gives me some delight to note that the gender indicates the affliction is confined to males only. So. Gentlemen, take care – the next victim could be YOU![78]

[75] Juliet Peter, ‘Revolution Unrolled’, NZP, 15:1, pp. 18 – 19. See also NZP, 14:2, p. 13.
[76] NZP, 15:1, 1973, p. 18.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., p. 19.

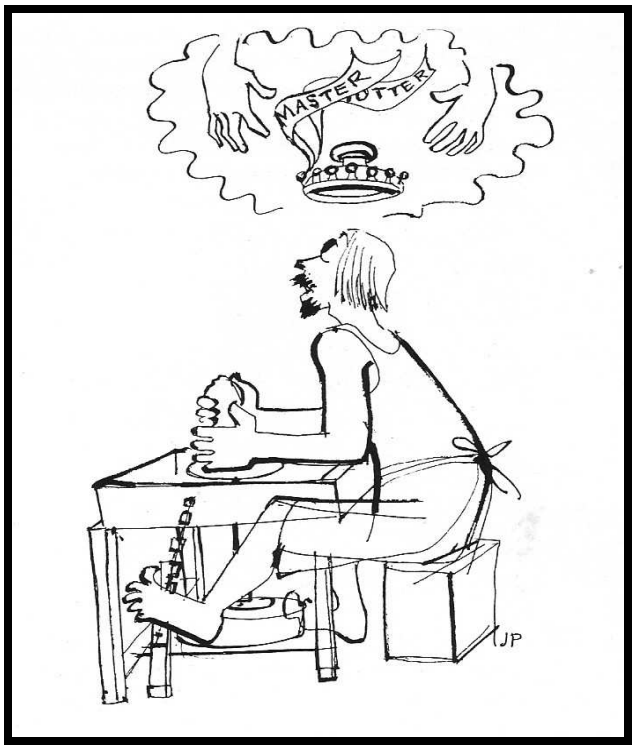

Figure VIII. Master Potter. NZP, 15:1, 1973, p. 20.

The spat between the two generations highlighted the inadequacies of the structure of the NZSP. The organisation was not reaching the vast majority of potters, appeared to be directionless and had come under sustained criticism from a range of potters from the professionals to the aspiring professional. In 1972 the Wellington Potters' Association agreed to hold the fifteenth National Exhibition and, in a defensive tone, suggested that the exhibition continued to serve a number of important roles including: giving the NZSP a purpose, serving as a vehicle for communication amongst potters, inspiring new potters and operating as a public window for the NZSP.[79] The article continued 'It was agreed that the exhibition should fulfil its purpose by showing the best of what is going on in New Zealand. [but] While standards are important, a highly

[79] NZP, 14:2, 1972, p. 22.

exclusive showing is not seen operating within this context'.[80] The exhibition subsequently received a luke-warm review by the NZP's anonymous critic.[81]

By the mid-1970s the criticism of New Zealand pottery was not only coming from within the potting community. Edward C. Simpson, in his review of the 1973 New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts exhibition, described the pottery as 'dull and colourless' and later that it looked 'heavy and clumsy', but he also demonstrated his lack of knowledge by claiming that 'New Zealand clays are stoneware clays'.[82] In a similar vein the *Auckland Star* observed:

> Almost twenty years have gone since the pottery movement began to blossom and its seems to have become jaded in the last few years. Craftsmanship it seems is no longer enough to inspire our appetite for fired clay and rich glaze. We hope some inventive young potters are lurking in the wings ready to rush on and supply the angry inspiration the pottery scene badly needs.[83]

The change came in the early 1980s, following an informal meeting of three NZSP members and the editor of the NZP held at Tokomaru Bay. They 'exchange[d] views on how the Society might evolve to meet the changing needs of New Zealand's 2,000 livelihood and 20,000 hobby potters.'[84] The informal meeting was followed by the 1981 AGM of the NZSP in Palmerston North where those gathered 'agreed "to do away with selective membership."'[85] Although different categories of membership still applied there were no restrictions based on selection for exhibitions and length of service. The decision reinvigorated the movement and democratised the Society. Between January and November 1981 the membership of the NZSP increased from 120 to 520.[86] Many were from Nelson.

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[80] Ibid.
[81] NZP, 15:1, 1973, pp. 42 – 43.
[82] NZP, 15:2, 1973, p. 27.
[83] *Auckland Star* 25 August 1973, quoted in NZP, 15:2, 1973, p. 35.
[84] NZP, 23:1, 1981, p. 2.
[85] Ibid., p. 4.
[86] NZP, 24:1, 1982, p. 18.

The restrictions on membership that caused so much anguish and irritation were, in the end, surrendered with little resistance largely because it was clear that the NZSP was in decline. Fears about maintaining standards remained, and one suspects, would have existed no matter what structure was originally developed. To most Nelson potters the NZSP had seemed a remote organisation. Austin Davies's need to find pottery to supply his 1976 exhibition and sale indicated that the standards that the NZSP set were largely irrelevant, even at one of New Zealand's oldest and most distinguished art galleries.[87] The 1970s was, as we have seen from the numbers involved, a period of considerable growth and activity for studio pottery. The increased membership of the NZSP that was needed would be called on to fight sales taxes[88] and the lifting of tariffs[89] that would impact on potters in the late 1970s and were being proposed as early as 1972.

[87] See Introduction.
[88] NZSP, AGM Minutes, 26 October 1975. See also *New Zealand Crafts*, No. 1 July, 1982, p. 15.
[89] NZSP, AGM Minutes, 22 October 1972.

Conclusion

Between the mid 1950s and the mid 1970s interest in studio pottery in Nelson proliferated to such an extent that it assisted the region to gain a reputation as a centre for the arts. For many who enrolled in a pottery class or joined clubs to fill in leisure time, to 'get out of the house',[1] to relax after work or to learn a new skill, it was an opportunity to revive the satisfaction they had felt from the craftwork they had been exposed to at school. Many, often to their own surprise and delight, became professional craftsmen and craftswomen. Another group of potters came from overseas. Sometimes the immigrants were professionally trained and often they had come to New Zealand to enjoy, what they believed to be, a more fulfilling way of life. For those who wished to pursue a career in the arts, pottery provided an art-form that was readily accepted by a buying public that was eager to own a piece of 'art' that could also be 'useful'. Both groups rode a wave of public support that encouraged and sometimes surprised them. They found they were supported in an economic environment that made the work they produced very easy to sell. In another time and place these opportunities would not have been available to them.

As the studio pottery movement expanded in Nelson and across New Zealand various groups attempted to control it. The control was justified on the grounds that standards needed to be maintained to ensure that the movement's reputation was not damaged by work of inferior quality. The New Zealand Society of Potters set itself up as the controller of standards – standards based on the inherited Anglo-Oriental traditions promoted by Bernard Leach in *A Potter's Book*. It was a tradition that was based on a dubious understanding of an Oriental philosophy that itself had a questionable foundation.

Leach's influence was vital to the movement but his ideas, in some cases, stifled technical developments and set unobtainable goals and expectations in

[1] Doreen Blumhardt, *Craft New Zealand. The Art of the Craftsman*, Wellington: Reed, 1981, p. 2.

place. Furthermore, the conflict between the cult of the "unknown craftsman", part of Leach's imported philosophy, and western ideas of individual achievement show that eastern ideas of anonymity had little chance of achieving widespread acceptance in New Zealand.[2] Potters, such as Nelson-based Mirek Smišek, who had worked both in Japan and at Leach's pottery in Cornwall became symbols of the tradition - but they did not seek anonymity. There was also an element of cultural subservience in the reaction to the ideas that came from overseas. New Zealand potters who had not visited Japan or worked at St Ives Pottery in Cornwall may have felt inferior to those who had. Ultimately those who did wish to subscribe to the philosophy tended to select only those aspects that appealed to them.

Potters such as Jack Laird took the country-based pottery model that Leach advocated but adapted it to suit the economic and cultural conditions that existed in New Zealand. Jack and Peggy Laird established Waimea Pottery in Nelson as a country pottery but based on modern Scandinavian design. Both the design of the pottery building and the pottery itself followed this example. Those who accepted the Anglo-Oriental orthodoxy without reservation treated the Laird's pursuit of a more commercial model with suspicion. The proponents of the Leach model set the parameters by which 'the best' pottery in New Zealand was judged. The clash of ideas was played out at the national exhibitions of the New Zealand Society of Potters. To become a member of the NZSP a potter had to have work selected for the national exhibition. Royce McGlashen, the Laird's first apprentice, for example, had his work rejected from a NZSP exhibition in the early 1970s and was told 'to continuing practising for a few more years'.[3] He was four years into a five-year apprenticeship at Waimea Pottery.[4] Decisions about who could become a NZSP member were not always based on quality and may have been used to send messages to those who did not accept the imported orthodoxy.

[2] Cape, *Please Touch*, p. 80.
[3] Trudi McGlashen, email to author, 6 June 2007.
[4] Warren, p. 20. Royce McGlashen began his apprenticeship in 1966.

Many of the potters in Nelson had little interest in Leach's ideas or their Anglo-Oriental roots, and the buying public did not seem to care what 'standards' the pottery was supposed to exemplify. The ability to sell work with relative ease meant that there seemed to be no reason for the potters to seek a deeper understanding of the philosophy behind what they were doing or feel bound to standards set by the remote arbitrators. The sale of their work to the public carried far more kudos in terms of immediate satisfaction and financial incentive than the rewards that might be gained from a distant NZSP exhibition. In addition, submitting pottery for selection based on a poorly defined set of criteria exposed potters to rejection that often appeared arbitrary and inconsistent.

The control on imports in New Zealand was a critical component in the success of the movement. It was because of the restrictions on imported pottery that potters were able to sell their work with ease. The success of studio pottery in terms of sales was a by-product of far larger economic and commercial forces and conditions. Harry and May Davis in the mid 1960s, for example, were aware that their work should use Crown Lynn pottery as the benchmark for the pricing of their work - and did so.[5] Hobby potters, whose sales were often modest, did not concern themselves with why their work sold and some may have seen the sales as an endorsement of their level of skill. Larger operations, such as Waimea Pottery, were however, aware that economic interests much larger than theirs were protecting them. But they also believed that their work sold easily because they had established high standards and their pottery had a unique quality to it. The public, seeing hand-made New Zealand pottery sitting alongside imported pottery in department stores, was also more accepting of the notion that pottery produced in New Zealand was as good as imported ware.

Pottery, both machine-manufactured and hand-made, were subject to fashions in the same way other consumer items were. Tom Clark, the founder of Crown Lynn Pottery, recalled that the retailers he sold to in the mid-1960s 'would always demand "what's new, what's new" – "and if you're trying to sell the same

[5] Gwenny Davis, 'Clay, Celebrating the Creative History of Potters and Pottery in Nelson', Nelson Provincial Museum, Opening speech, 26 May 2007.

old thing, you've got no show".'[6] The traditions inherited from Leach and the Orient were new and novel when they first appeared in the 1950s but, like Crown Lynn pottery, they were subject to the same public demand for 'the new'. By the late-1960s both potters and the public wanted change. However, the standards set by the NZSP were based on the Leach tradition and change was not part of that philosophy. Some potters rebelled against the restrictions that those traditions placed on them and the stranglehold that the NZSP had on arbitrating standards. By the late-1970s new exhibitions such as the Fletcher Brownbuilt Pottery Award, that did not demand NZSP membership and offered a substantial monetary prize,[7] forced the NZSP to become a much more open organisation and work seen at their later exhibitions was far more innovative.[8]

The gap between work and play was quite distinctive in New Zealand during this time. As adults, most New Zealanders considered work to be more important than play in their lives, but they may have agreed with the American philosopher Hannah Arendt[9] who wrote:

> Whatever we do, we are supposed to do for the sake of "making a living"; such is the verdict of society, and the number of people, especially in the professions who might challenge it, has decreased rapidly. The only exception society is willing to grant is the artist, who, strictly speaking, is the only "worker" left in a laboring society. … labor theories … define labor as the opposite of play. … all serious activities … are called labor … every activity which is not necessary either for the life of the individual or for the life process of society is subsumed under playfulness.10

The studio pottery movement was an opportunity for people to play and, using the earning of a living as a definition, work at the same time. New Zealanders appeared to have allowed, even encouraged, potters (artists) to make their play (hobby) become their work.

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[6] Monk, p. 74.
[7] Peter Shaw, 'The Fletcher Challenge Ceramics Award 1977 – 1996', *The Fletcher Trust Collection,* URL: http://www.fletchercollection.co.nz/ceramics.php , retrieved 14 May 2007.
[8] NZP, 23:1, 1981. At the 23rd National Exhibition of the NZSP work by ninety-five members was displayed at the Manawatu Art Gallery alongside work by fifty-seven non-members.
[9] Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy retrieved 20 July 2006, from http://www.iep.utm.edu/a/arendt.htm#top
[10] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 2nd ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 126-7.

The New Zealand public had an ambiguous understanding of the pottery movement and potters. The belief that making pottery was not 'a real job' but rather a hobby, particularly where women were concerned, even when potters were earning their living from the craft. Some commentators, such as Bill Sutch, were convinced that the economic development of a country was reflected in the social position of women.[11] He believed that New Zealanders needed to take a new approach to the position of women in the workforce. Sutch proposed that the increasing number of married women in the workforce was a feature of a developed country.[12] Other trends included the growth of women working part-time and women with young children in the workforce.[13] Social policies that allowed women to undertake such work lagged behind Sutch's ideals in New Zealand. Some women therefore, grasped the opportunity to earn income from home as a means of overcoming many of those difficulties. The role of women in the arts was informed in the publics mind by earlier ideas that the arts were 'a suitable accomplishment rather than an absorbing career'.[14] Women who made a very successful and lucrative career from pottery challenged those ideas. The argument also ignored the relatively even ratio of women and men, as was evident in Nelson, who were involved in the movement and the male domination of certain aspects of pottery such as throwing.

The desire to use creative skills that the New Zealand education system had, at all levels, encouraged and fostered from the mid-1940s fuelled the movement. The school system had become more child-centred and aware of the importance of play in learning. Later, adult education would help to encourage that learning for an older group who could devote more time to leisure pursuits. Many in Nelson who became involved with the movement spoke of the sense of satisfaction that making pottery by hand gave them. Karl Hils claimed, in an introduction to an instructional book on crafts, that the need to create was an

[11] W. B. Sutch, 'Women's Contribution in a Changing Society', Wellington: Industries and Commerce, 1964, p. 5.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., pp. 8 – 10.
[14] Oliver, 'The Awakening Imagination, 1940 – 1980' in Rice, *The Oxford History,* p. 568.

almost innate human desire: ‘Craft-work is guided by an inner impulse – sometimes deriving from play – and is a manual art that promotes the development of the complete or integrated person.’[15]

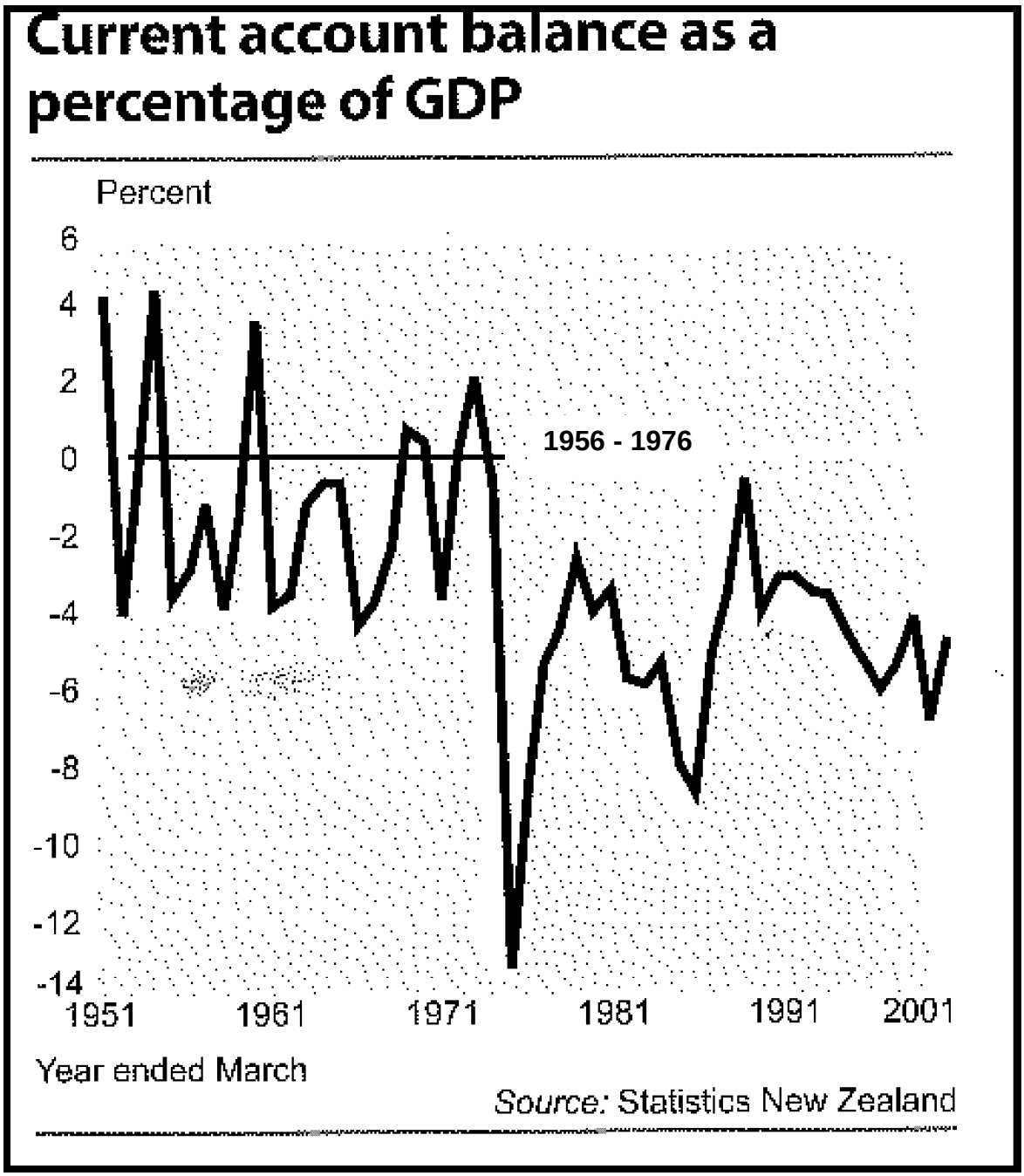
The movement in Nelson, and nationally, represented, for those who took part and those who supported it, a period when they could break away from the accepted norms of a conservative society in a comparatively safe way. New Zealand, after World War Two, was a more prosperous society than at any other time in the nation’s history. Mass-produced products were becoming more abundant but choice was limited by a heavily regulated economy. The craftsperson and the work they produced were points of difference. The potter sat somewhere between the ‘worker’, who produced functional, consumer goods, and an ‘artist’, who was not tied to the conventions that other members of society were. A potter was no longer a craftsman as in earlier times and therefore the middle classes need not be concerned about lowering their status. In fact the opposite was true – some felt that their occupational status as a potter was higher. Hobbyists could also experience this freedom through their clubs and supporters through purchasing the pottery, which of course could be used in the kitchen.

When Austin Davies sought a solution to the financial problems faced by the Bishop Suter Art Gallery in 1976 he choose pottery as the art form he would feature in his summer exhibition and sale. By 1976 it was clear that hand-made pottery had huge appeal to the public of New Zealand and the visitors to Nelson. What was less clear, however, was where pottery sat in the world of art. Nelson had never seen a NZSP national exhibition because most Nelson potters were excluded from membership of the Society through rules that favoured the pioneers of the movement. To hold an exhibition of the size that Davies planned could have highlighted the conflict between standards that had been protected by the NZSP and the commercial success that potters in Nelson were experiencing. It was a conundrum with which potters had been struggling for

[15] Karl Hils, *Crafts for All,* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960, p. x.

twenty years. In addition, Davies would have been aware that both his own and the gallery's reputation would be tarnished if his exhibition was seen as a commercial act of desperation - and yet he went ahead. The commercial side of the exhibition was huge success. Eventually the NZSP changed the restrictive rules and the earlier criteria demanded at exhibitions, based on the Anglo-Oriental standards set by Bernard Leach, were eased, permitting the most experienced potters in Nelson to go on to make their mark on the national scene. Commercial forces in the end dominated the movement in Nelson. But out of that commercial environment a generation of proficient potters went on to play a major role in the NZSP exhibitions and other national showings of New Zealand pottery. And the amateurs continued to enjoy their hobby and their modest financial success without damaging the reputation of Nelson studio pottery.

Appendix I



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