– Junior Dowie

The man of the moment, Professor Rex Nettleford of the University of the West Indies (UWI), sits in rapt attention as he listens to Caribbean author George Lamming during Sunday's launch of a three-day seminar in his honour. At left is Principal of the Mona Campus of the University, Gerald Lalor.

Prof. Nettleford hailed

A THREE-DAY conference in honour of Caribbean cultural icon, Professor Rex Nettleford, kicked off at the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI) on Sunday night.

The conference, which will see a number of seminars on aspects of Caribbean life running concurrently, will end tomorrow.

Well-known Caribbean novelist, George Lamming, who gave the keynote address Sunday night, hailed the creative genius of Rex Nettleford, whose work, he said, constantly challenged the Caribbean people to confront their realties.

Professor Nettleford was hailed for his pioneering work in the creative arts, as well as his writings and research on the experience of Blacks in the diaspora.

Recognising the contribution of Professor Nettleford, Mr. Lamming noted that the native base of one's existence must always be supported by a native cultural vision.

He said that one of the great shortcomings of the region's politicians, planners and education system is that they fail to accept art as an intellectual discipline. He deplored the emerging societies in the Caribbean where "money-making is taught as the chief social function".

"It is in such a climate that every educator, including the artist, is challenged to decide if he will live in a society or a service station," Mr. Lamming noted.

The education system, he stated, should enable each boy and girl to understand "the menace of market imperialism and understand why it is absolutely necessary to resist it."

Mr. Lamming described Professor Nettleford as a "creative reservoir" who, through his pioneering work with the National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC), discovered the appropriate language for the Caribbean was the dance medium.