

Better Deal Sought For Teachers Of Kindergartens

Scores of dissatisfied Auckland kindergarten teachers aim to spell out their need for improved working conditions at a meeting with Auckland MPs in November.

In seeking better teacher-child ratios and higher pay, they hope to make MPs aware of their "stagnant" situation.

The national past-president of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association, Robin Houliker, says no improvements to staffing ratios have been made since the Government began to pay the teachers' salaries in the 1940s.

Action is long overdue, she says.

"It is so frustrating that we are still fighting the same old issues."

Equal Pay

The association would like to see three trained teachers to all grade one kindergartens, instead of the present two. Two sessions of 40 children are held each weekday.

Equal pay with primary school teachers is also on the list of changes being sought.

At present, kindergarten teachers have working conditions inferior to those of other teaching groups, claims Robin Houliker.

Staffing ratios prevent them taking morning and afternoon breaks, and lunch breaks are often eroded.

First Chance

"Perhaps if more money was spent on the early stages of teaching, not as much would have to be spent at the other end of the education sphere," she says.

"We are one of the first educational institutions for children, and provide the foundations for learning."

After years of lobbying, protesting and endless attempts to improve working conditions, Robin Houliker often wonders if the fight might be futile.

But her determination

reasserts itself and she becomes adamant that in the long run, the association will win.

Quitting

"If the Government does not change its policy soon, a lot of good teachers will leave," she says.

One who has already done so is Elizabeth Greig.

She says that in the six months since she quit, her friends and family have noticed the improvement in her health.

Each year, Elizabeth Greig and another trained teacher worked with about 156 children. Stress soon began to show, she says.

She suffered severe headaches, long working

hours and a dwindled social life.

"I became so consumed by the job that I had nothing left for me."

"I enjoyed working with the children and getting to know the mums — but it just became too demanding."

Elizabeth Greig believes that if classes were smaller or a ratio of one teacher to 10 children was introduced stress and tension would be relieved.

Orakei kindergarten teachers Ailsa Scott and Lois Neunz vouch that an extra teacher eases the workload.

Until a year ago, they felt like leaving the job, too. But they were lucky —

Mainly Women

they were granted an extra teacher.

"With an extra teacher, we were able to plan better activities, spend more time individually with the children and get to know the families better," says Lois Neunz.

"Mother - helps are always great, but they don't have the worry of taking total responsibility for 40 children."

"With an extra teacher that worry is relieved, the teacher is more relaxed and the child is better taught."

Artists' Work Draws Worlds Together

The vision of a twinset-and-pearls matron and a motorbike gang member in full regalia — leather gear, floppy boots, chain hanging from a pocket — standing side by side to study a painting is the stuff of life for Margaret Young.

"They were absorbed ... comfortable," she says.

That scenario took place in Taumarunui the fortnight Margaret Young took 140 paintings to town. Of the 8000 population, 3500 came to look. "It was just amazing," she says.

Running a gallery in Hamilton for the past two years, Margaret Young has made a point of visiting small towns, but now she is heading for Auckland.

Along with the works of



People

With
Lesley
Lundy

acclaimed tie-dyer Lani Morris and bird specialist Janet Marshall, she will display for artists sufficiently emboldened to discuss their creations with her.

"So often, the people who can't afford to buy are deprived of art — it is

usually only taken where those with the money to buy it go. Yet everyone recognises and enjoys quality work."

"They felt that if I took art to them, they could come to me," she says.

"Artists on the whole are reticent about their abilities and are sensitive — it is part of themselves they are laying out before the public gaze because art is involved with the emotions."

The Auckland exhibition will run at the Auckland Building Centre from October 20 to November 1.

★ ★ ★

Corporal Janine Leyden, of Dunedin, is the first woman to be awarded a Royal New Zealand Air Force flight crew brevet.

The small half-wing bre-

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