

PRESIDENT'S OPENING REMARKS

WANGANUI - 1962

On the closing date for remits to be considered by this Conference there were two which I took the liberty of asking the associations to withdraw, as I had intended to use their theme for my opening remarks.

1. That the Conference recommend to the Executive to bring down a report on the word "Free" and the reasons why its use is retained and
2. That the word "Free" be deleted from the title of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union, and, if possible, a suitable word be substituted.

What had decided me to speak on this subject was the number of times during the course of my visits to associations when I was asked to explain the meaning of this word and to say why a specified sum could not be named by kindergarten teachers when parents enquired what they should give, seeing a notice which was sent to parents by a local committee, stating, "It will be necessary to increase the fee for children attending this kindergarten. In future, morning children will be charged 5/- and afternoon children 2/6", and reading association reports which said that the word "free" had nothing to do with money. Let us understand clearly that the word "free" has everything to do with money.

The Kindergarten Regulations, 1959, state that no fee may be demanded in respect of any child attending a free kindergarten. The whole structure of the movement is based on that requirement and continued Government assistance depends on strict adherence to that rule. The movement itself has advanced other meanings of the word "free" - that the service is free to any child between the ages of three and five, provided he is in good health and there is a vacancy for him; free, too, because his attendance is not compulsory as it is once his name is entered on the roll of a primary school. But these are not the real meaning of this word. If you consult the Concise Oxford Dictionary you will see that a free school is one where no fees are charged and that is what we mean by a free kindergarten. No fees are charged.

Although no fee may be demanded, it is reasonable to invite contributions towards the cost of the service. Proof of the readiness of parents to accept this invitation is clearly evident in annual accounts of every association, where, under the heading of parents' or children's donations, varying amounts, ranging from just under £200 to well over £300, are acknowledged. But some associations think this is not enough, some say that many parents send very little or nothing at all. How do associations know this? In the course of her address to the 1957 Conference, the Supervisor of Pre-School Services made reference to the question of voluntary donations. In her opinion, even if a fixed contribution were permissible, in many cases the income would be less than is received at present, and I would support that view. If you tell people what to give, whatever the cause, you rob them of the pleasure of giving and their donation is no longer voluntary. And who would say what they should give? Might there not come a time when a fee, considered sufficient today, would become inadequate? Who would say that it should be increased? Miss Gallagher stressed that the utmost tact and discretion should be used in handling this question and that there must be no suggestion of a fixed subscription. The amounts given should be a matter of confidence to the staff, who should be the only persons who know who gives what. And the staff should not be expected - or offer - to suggest any sum.

There is a very easy way to let parents know how they can help to lighten the burden of financial responsibility associations shoulder in administering free kindergartens - by telling them and telling them often how much it costs each year and how the money is spent in the interests of their children. If £300 is needed for heating, cleaning, expendable equipment, maintenance and repair, and if there are 80 children in the kindergarten for 38 weeks in the year, it is a matter of simple arithmetic

for anyone to decide his share of responsibility. If parents fail to meet the challenge to be directly associated with the cost of the service given to them and their children, the association must accept it.

We have all become members of free kindergarten associations knowing full well that our service is voluntary, but, and this is the important thing to realise, having volunteered to assist, we have committed ourselves to pursue the objects and observe the rules. It is no use to say we did not know the rules.

Let us look at the objects of free kindergarten associations. Quite simply they are "To establish and carry on free kindergartens" or "To prepare the way for free kindergartens". Why have we taken this resolve? For whom are we establishing these free kindergartens? Are we sincere when we say that we aim to provide an extension and complement of the home; that the early formative years are the most important in a child's life and that attendance at a kindergarten will give an important social and educational experience to little children. Which children? All children? Or just those whose parents make a satisfactory cash contribution?

If we delete this difficult word, what will we use in its place? Public kindergartens? Government kindergartens? Or just kindergartens? Then how will they be distinguished from private kindergartens registered under the Child Care Centre Regulations? Is it not a matter for pride that it is specifically stated in those regulations that free kindergartens are outside their scope? If the general public does not understand what a free kindergarten is, ours is the task to explain.

I wonder if those who press for the deletion of this word from our title have ever stopped to think of the work and expense it would cause, even if the Department of Education approved. Registering changes in every association's Constitution (think of that cost at 10/6d. a clause), discarding and renewing notepaper, rubber stamps, lapel badges, Union diplomas, registering changes in title deeds, reprinting handbooks and all other literature supplied by the Union, changing the name of every bank account, rewriting the Kindergarten Regulations - quite a heavy programme ahead!

No one who has read the history of the free kindergarten movement can have failed to be impressed by the courage and persistent endeavour of those who began the first free kindergarten in 1889 and those who carried on the work throughout the long period of little, and at times, no Government financial assistance, up to 1948-49. Few of us know anything of those times, in fact, I doubt if many people here today have served for more than ten years. It is good for us to realise what we owe to the pioneers of this grand movement and to understand our obligation to respect and maintain its fine traditions. We have come a long way since the first free kindergarten was established over 73 years ago. We have been able to build on sure foundations carefully laid by devoted workers whose chief concern was to provide for the social, emotional and physical welfare of little children. We have been most generously helped on our way by successive Governments. We have developed a pre-school service which is the envy of many parts of the world. Let us keep it FREE.

Dr Cantwell said that it was very pleasing to see such a large gathering, all interested in the welfare and development of children. He proposed to speak about the emotional, mental and physical development of the child.

Whereas there is a lot of psychology talked and discussed these days he hoped he would be able to give some points which would be of use.

Speaking generally the basic need of the infant and child is to grow and mature into a well-adjusted adult with sound physical and mental health. Success, or even survival will depend on parental care and guidance. This must be adapted to each child's needs and capabilities.

There are several factors which influence mental and emotional development in the child. First, the factor of heredity. We know little about heredity. The reason is that some children are subject not only to hereditary but to environmental and parental factors.

We do know a considerable amount about environment and its effect on the welfare of the child. If we were to go into the nursery of a maternity hospital and pick out 25 babies, it would be interesting to think what is going to happen to the children when they mature into adults.

Some 5 would eventually enter a mental hospital.
Another 5 would be profoundly neurotic.
Another 5 would be moderately neurotic.
Another 5 would be mildly neurotic.
The remaining 5 would develop into well-adjusted adults.

We as parents have a very big responsibility in raising a family against such a background of statistics.

Several factors do influence the ultimate behaviour of the child who merely imitates his parents' reactions and behaviour. The answer is that as soon as a baby is born mother love is transmitted to him in the way that mother handles him. This behaviour forms a basis for a subsequent satisfactory or unsatisfactory relationship. Not all children are similar in development, and failure to understand this causes many vital problems. The more children one has experience with the more humble one becomes. We must accept that no two children are the same. No two children in the same family have the same development. What does for one will not do for the other. With each new child the family undergoes a change.

The effect of brothers and sisters on the new-born baby depends on whether the older children have been taught to accept the new baby as it should be accepted. Parents should make quite sure that they have not predicted whether it will be a boy or a girl. The manner in which the new baby is accepted by the rest of the family will be a measure of how much good work parents have done beforehand.

I have told you of some influences and how they affect the baby. Then there will be the effect of environment and its importance in moulding personality, particularly from the age of 2 years onwards. We see this in the only child or the child who is the youngest in the large family, with the next child 4 or 5 years older. This creates a problem for the mother in how to manage this child. The toddler or the pre-school child does need opportunity to play and mix with a small group of other children of similar age, under adult supervision. As he grows older the group can be larger and supervision less individual.

The child graduates from play with a companion to larger groups and group activities requiring larger play areas. In this age group environment and the effect of a kindergarten with a good director and her staff can assist materially in the child's growing up. However, not all children have the need for kindergarten experience, but I would say that, if they did have this experience, they could not fail to benefit from it. Kindergarten comes into its own especially with the only child who has no-one to play with and so rapidly tires of even the most expensive toys. Kindergarten helps to foster healthy independence

in the children and gradually enables them to assume independence as an adult. Some children have difficulty in attaining this independence and kindergarten helps to foster and establish this healthy independence.

Pre-entry groups help the child to settle in at kindergarten. Kindergarten also provides an opportunity to play in a way which would not be tolerated in many homes. In homes where a child is not allowed to enjoy "messy" play the environment becomes abnormal and kindergarten can become of very great benefit.

Kindergarten helps the mother to understand her child, for it is there that the mother will be able to see that her child has many of the characteristics of other children. It also helps both mother and child by allowing early signs of mal-adjustment to become apparent and early steps can be taken to stop such mal-adjustment. Kindergarten also is helpful in many ways which cannot be enumerated, but certainly the most important is in the moulding of the child's mental and emotional frame of mind.

We can now move on to school, which takes over where kindergarten leaves off. When he goes to school a well-adjusted child will assume leadership. He is more ready to learn then than at any other time in his life. It is for this reason that it is preferable to take the child at the age of 5 and not at the beginning of the term.

The child learns best when he is with people who understand him. A child's first day at kindergarten or school must have a lasting impression on him. School offers the child new relationship with adults. A child not well-adjusted with adults will not settle down. The teacher is a very important person, looked up to by the child and the teacher is used by the child as a model on which to base his imitation of adults. In his own age group the child wants to be like others more than anything else. At school joining the gang or group activities gives him moral fortitude so that he will learn to be both a follower and a leader.

Emotional Growing Pains: Jealousy comes from a wish to be recognised and admired. When the child meets competition jealousy may occur. If it is in any way marked the cause should be sought, similarly with fear. Too much can be made of certain fears, but where natural caution changes to over-powering fear, fear of dark and fire, fear of animals, something should be done. Handling of children when they have fears is most important. It is quite amazing the number of adults who have pathological fears. It is up to parents to use fear temperately and not make it an overpowering feature in the child's life.

Anger is useful to the child as a protective mechanism and rises when the child can't get something he wants. Excessive anger demands investigation.

Lying: We must differentiate to quite an extent here. Most children tell the truth until they find it uncomfortable to do so. If we as adults make it uncomfortable for them to tell the truth, they will distort it and we have only ourselves to blame.

Similarly with stealing, when consistent it should be investigated.

If a child is to be put on the road to good mental health he needs a sense of belonging in his family group. He needs to feel important and if he does not have that feeling then trouble can arise. The child needs experience in being needed in the sense that the family actually depends upon him for some part of day to day existence.

Furthermore, the child needs adjustment with a group that will help him to be either a follower or a leader. He certainly gets this at kindergarten if not at school.

Finally, the child needs experience in independence. In fostering the spirit of independence parents must be careful not to push the child

into independence too fast. They must be careful not to ask too much of them at a very young age.

The child needs the security of a stable environment. The child becomes confused when parents are in disagreement. Discipline should be consistent and understanding.

Dr. Cantwell concluded by expressing the hope that his address had helped a little towards understanding the child a little better in putting them on the road to normal emotional and mental health.

REPORT OF THE IXth ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD ORGANISATION
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. LONDON, July 15 - 22,
1962.

Current Officers:

President: Miss Hazel Gabbard (U.S.A.)
Vice-President: Mlle. Alice Claret (Belgium)
Mr Jens Sigsgaard (Denmark)
Mme. Herbinier-Lebert (France)
Dr. Ernst Kothbauer (Austria)

British National Committee:

39 Queen Anne Street,
LONDON, W.1.

Founder President: Lady Allen of Hurtwood
Chairman: Miss P. M. Pickard
Treasurer: Miss W. B. C. Lovell
Hon. Secretary: Miss M. B. Denny.

Lecturers: Dr Anna Freud, Director, Hampstead Child-Therapy Clinic,
"The Emotional and Social Development of Young Children".

Dr Andre Berge, Psychopedagogic Clinic of the Paris Academy
"The Understanding Adult".

Dr Lois B. Murphy, Research Psychologist, The Menninger
Foundation, Topeka, Kansas, U.S.A.
"World Wide Implications of the Education of Young Children".

I have just attended the most exciting meeting of my life - the IXth Assembly of the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education, known as OMEP from the initials of the French Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire. I was indeed privileged to be at this meeting in London where nearly 400 members from more than 30 countries were in attendance. I will do my best to give you a brief account of the proceedings, but feel whatever I write here cannot possibly convey either the tremendous value of OMEP's work in promoting healthy human relationships and understanding among the peoples of the world, or the great spirit of sincere friendliness and positive enthusiasm of every member at the Assembly.

Miss H. F. Gabbard, World President of OMEP, presided at the opening of the Assembly on Monday morning, July 16th. Miss Gabbard welcomed all members who, she said, were at the Assembly to share ideas and learn what is happening to children in all parts of the world.

Then Miss P. M. Pickard, as Chairman of the British National Committee of OMEP, also welcomed the delegates. Miss Pickard pointed out that as OMEP is international the Assembly Programme had been decided by the World Council and the British Committee had only been responsible for carrying out the details of the meeting. She explained that as OMEP provides opportunities for discussion and exchange of ideas about young children at an international level, it has a great contribution to make towards world peace. It is only 83 years since