

Papers Past — Evening Post — 8 February 1932 — THE YOUNG MIND

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THE YOUNG MIND KINDERGARTEN WORK IMPORTANCE STRESSED WHAT AUSTRALIA DOES

The value of kindergarten work was stressed by Miss E. Wilson, principal of the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association, in an interview with a "Post" reporter to-day. Miss Wilson has just returned from a visit to Australia, and she outlined the steps which have been taken there to establish the kindergarten on a sound basis.

It will be very enheartening to workers in the cause of the pre-school child throughout New Zealand to know that their fellow-workers in Australia have, so far, not only stemmed the tide of destruction that threatened their work there, but made progress in spite of these besetting difficulties," said Miss Wilson. "Australians have a great respect for New Zealanders, because of the efforts that are made in the cause of education in this country. Imagine, then, the consternation when word came through stating that the New Zealand Government had decided to withdraw all grants and subsidies for Free Kindergarten work. It seems hardly believable that any country could ruthlessly sweep away a movement which has world-wide recognition and which is acclaimed by the teaching and medical profession as one of the most worth-while works a country can undertake. We trust all recognise the need for drastic economy and the responsibility that the world's present financial position places upon the shoulders of her leaders and peoples, but it must also be recognised that an economy that is detrimental to the future progress of a country should be the last to be considered.

"The kindergarten movement throughout Australia has had Government recognition for many years. As in New Zealand, it caters primarily for the children of the more congested areas of the cities, for it is recognised that although the experiences and training kindergarten offers are valuable to every child, country children, at least, have healthful surroundings and contact with the glories of nature of which our artificial city life robs us.

AIM OF THE MOVEMENT.

"Kindergarten aims to bring back to the city child that freedom, beauty, and simplicity in life which is his right. The movement in Australia is substantially supported by the public and parents of the children. During the recent visit I had many instances of the added co-operation of the parents during the difficult period through which Australia has been passing.

bourne I was told that they had more volunteers than they had work for among the mothers, who helped in the preparation of the food and washing up (which is a large item for a family of 120), washing, sewing, etc. The fathers, too, have come forward splendidly, and in both Sydney and Melbourne I was shown with pride the cal-somining that had been done by fathers, the toys that had been made for the Christmas trees, and the many odd carpentering jobs that had been executed. Without co-operation our civic life must fail. Surely then a thinking community must value greatly any organisation that is achieving such an ideal. It has been found necessary to re-organise kindergarten work in Sydney and Melbourne since unemployment became rife. Poverty in some areas has been appalling, and a new scheme of training the children morning and afternoon, instead of letting them go to their cheerless homes at noon has been instituted in many centres. An alteration to the kindergarten routine and the provision of a mid-day meal which in many cases is the only nourishing meal they get, has helped a great deal towards keeping the children healthy and well. A much more economical and humane policy than having to treat disease caused through malnutrition and neglect.

A PREPARATION.

"There are still thousands of people in every community who in their ignorance are treating effect rather than cause. In our ignorance we send a child to school at the age of five years, without any thought as to whether we have laid the necessary foundation for all that is expected of him, i.e., a body that is strong and well nourished, a mind that is receptive, an attitude towards life and his fellow-creatures, that will make work a joy and co-operation second nature. And a happy, cheerful disposition that will be a tonic to all who contact him. The educators claim that kindergarten does all this, and we can prove it over and over again by actual examples and the evidence we have gathered. In Melbourne

being splendidly developed, and two nursery schools have been opened within the past twelve months. These are being run by the Kindergarten Union, and are proving valuable centres for research work. A special grant from the Carnegie Trust has made this possible, and all data is to be published. In Australia, as well as in New Zealand, arguments such as 'education is quite unnecessary for the child under school age' have to be faced. In reply one can only say, 'Why waste money and time on the foundations of your house?' Another argument is, 'We didn't have kindergartens when we were young, and what was good enough for us is good enough for the present generation.' This is a hopeless attitude of mind, and it is seldom consistent. We do not find these people walking rather than riding in trams, trains, and motor-cars, using candles rather than electric light, and stoking ranges rather than lighting the gas or turning on electricity. When one comes up against this sort of thing one can sympathise with Russia and almost understand her ruthlessness in ridding herself of her incubuses.

NO STAGE UNIMPORTANT.

"Every State in Australia has a residential kindergarten college, which gives a dignity to the work and increases training facilities. The work in New Zealand has not yet reached this development. In Sydney there were 100 students in training last year. This is another aspect of the work which few people realise. In New Zealand our kindergartens also offer facilities to training college students which they would not have if the kindergartens were closed. The fact that State school teachers and kindergarteners have formed themselves into a body known as the Commonwealth Kindergarten and Primary School Association in Sydney shows the bond between the two stages of education and the desire for mutual help and co-operation. No one can say that any stage in a child's life is unimportant. Everyone must admit of the policy of building true foundations. Thus I appeal to the people of New

the child the best it can from the time it is conceived until it is prepared and ready to strike out in life and make its way as a valuable citizen belonging to a progressive nation."

Professor B. Dawson, of Adelaide, who has been appointed to the Chair of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Otago University, arrived by the Monowai to-day from San Francisco after visiting clinics in the Old Country, the Continent, and America. He leaves for the South on Wednesday evening.

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