

# Education Head Stresses Value Of Pre-Primary School Tuition To Child

"The story I tell is a success story—a story of the gallant work of devoted women and a smaller number of men, for a job that they think is worth while," said Dr C. E. Beeby, Director of Education, when he spoke on kindergarten problems to the delegates at the New Zealand Kindergarten Union conference in Hastings last night.

"I believe in the value of pre-school education, and the problems facing it are problems created by the energies and success of those who have worked so hard for it," he said.

Dr Beeby referred to the early history of the kindergarten movement, and said that 30 years ago it was controlled by what appeared to be an older group of women. To-day there was more control by younger mothers, who put an enormous amount of work into the movement. The dominant feature of the movement, however, was that parents had become believers in the worth of pre-primary school tuition and the importance of these early years in the life of a child. To-day the kindergarten movement was regarded and accepted as a very useful part of a child's education and training.

## MOVEMENT'S GROWTH

Dr Beeby said that there were two things in kindergartens which had changed little over the years. The first was that the general aims were much the same, and the second was that kindergartens were still a matter of voluntary action on the part of parents in providing them. The speaker quoted figures to show the great increase in the movement, and also in the assistance given by the Government, and said that the erection of 112 new kindergarten buildings since 1948 was a "terrific" record.

"Think how many raffles that

must have meant," he said (laughter).

Dr Beeby said the Minister had now given authority for the Free Kindergarten Teachers' Associations to be placed on the recognised footing of a public service group in regard to salaries. Last year, £309,000 had been granted by the Government to free kindergartens. He said there was now a sense of career in kindergarten teaching and the whole picture was a very bright one.

One reason why the Department of Education had set its face firmly against the use of unskilled and untrained teachers, said Dr Beeby, was that the standard of kindergartens could not be allowed to fall. He contended that kindergartens must remain voluntary organisations, and they should have an organisation on national and local levels which would make them capable of meeting any situation.

## THREE PROBLEMS

Dr Beeby said that three problems faced the movement: (1) Staffing; (2) training; and (3) the fragmentation of the administrative system.

The situation in regard to staffing was, he said, no easier than it was in June of last year, and at the beginning of 1958 there would be 183 teaching vacancies. This would mean a system of priority in allocations, and would mean looking more closely at whether more kindergartens could be permitted, or whether more children could be accepted. There were people who urged that more trainees should be taken in, but it had to be remembered that the cost of education was rapidly increasing and there was still a great shortage of primary and secondary school teachers. It was the Government's obligation to staff these schools first, so it was not likely that there would be any increased intake of kindergarten trainees before 1962 at the earliest.

## AMALGAMATION VALUE

Associated with the problem of staffing was the need for more senior position teachers, and still another problem was that of training centre buildings. He said that the greatest problem concerning members of the Kindergarten Union was that of fragmentation of control. He would like to see some amalgamation of associations which would enable knowledge to be passed on and generally make for improvement.

# Value of Kindergarten Work In New Zealand Stressed

H. B. HERALD TRIBUNE

The demand for kindergartens continues throughout the country and there are now 72 associations affiliated to the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union, some administering as many as 30 free kindergartens, while others in outlying districts have only one under their control.

This was stated by the president of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union, Mrs. H. McCreanor, Christchurch, who will preside over the three-day annual conference which opens in the Assembly Hall, Hastings, late this afternoon.

It is the first time the conference has been held in this city, and about 140 delegates from the North and South Islands will attend.

The conference is to be opened by the Director of Education, Dr. C. E. Beeby.

Mrs. McCreanor said at present there are 190 free kindergartens recognised by the Department of Education giving pre-school experience to about 13 per cent of New Zealand's children between the ages of three and five years.

"A pleasing feature of this year's work is the renewed interest and keenness of the mothers in their parents' clubs, discussion groups, and many and varied programmes of interesting educational work are reported," she said.

"It is fundamental to the free kindergarten movement that parents should be closely associated with their children when they take their first steps out into the bigger new world of experience for which they are ready at this age. To this end, parents are encouraged to

spend considerable time with their children in the kindergartens," she said.

"Between the ages of three and four years, children eagerly seek companionship with children of their own age, and need to enter into active and vigorous constructive play activities, which it is difficult to cater for in modern homes.

"The free kindergartens are serving a useful purpose in the modern way of living—one needed more so now than in any other period in our history," she continued.

Close co-operation had been built up during the past two or three years between the union and the Kindergarten Teachers' Association. Shortage of trained staff which the free kindergarten movement was experiencing, together with all other professional groups, was the only hindrance to further expansion.

Time at the conference would be given to the question of recruitment.

"The Kindergarten Union considers it an absolute essential and fundamental to its philosophy that children of these tender and formative years, when the emotional and social patterns of their very personalities are being laid, should be placed in the hands of professional kindergartners, specially trained to understand and cope with the psychological needs of small children," Mrs. McCreanor said.

## ASSOCIATIONS

In a recent report, Mrs. McCreanor said that there were 72 associations affiliated to the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union.

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During the past few years there had been co-operation with the Kindergarten Teachers' Association, and the only hindrance to further expansion was the shortage of trained staff.

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At the conference last night was a discussion of the financial report and the financial position of the Union.

Mr. J. R. Ry also addressed the delegates for a social hour which delegates were to attend.

Members of the Hastings Association and members of other associations were present.

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For this reason New Zealand should "go its own way" in building duplex flats in the present structure.

"Think with the land"—another factor in the development of a predominant development suggested that high density housing in the Auckland district branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects.

These "Duplex" flats help to provide higher density housing without being in the way of other buildings.

Mr. F. H. Newman, Minister of Works and Buildings, said that the land conditions were described as specially suitable for New Zealand duplex flats.

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KINDERGARTEN UNION conference in Hastings: From left to right Mesdames L. R. Winter, council member and former president, C. Breuer, secretary, and R. Stevenson, president of the Hastings Free Kindergarten Association, photographed during a break in the proceedings.

## Kindergartens Urged to Avoid State Control

A warning to the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union to make its autonomous units as big and as strong as possible to avoid the Department of Education getting more power, was given by the Director of Education, Dr. C. E. Beeby, at the union's annual conference in Hastings last night.

"I want to avoid the department getting more power. We will give professional advice and help solve your problems, but we don't want to control your show," he said.

He advised the union to hand on their accumulated wealth of experience to new associations, of which there were seven last year.

The 72 associations were run by people without great experience of kindergarten work, although they were full of keenness and initiative, he said.

"I would like to see some amalgamation of associations on a voluntary basis. It would make the staffing situation easier and help maintain standards." New associations needed time to get experience. The union must apply the knowledge of the past to new associations. In his opinion, the existing organisation was not capable of further expansion without recognised kindergartens suffering in consequence, said Dr. Beeby.

### CONSOLIDATION.

The union was in full agreement with the Minister of Education when a period of consolidation was called for last year. "It was nothing to do with saving money, or a change in the Government's attitude to kindergarten work. The sole reason was shortage of staff."

New kindergartens who already had a "foot in the door" were received, but other kindergartens which did not meet standards required by the Government could not be admitted.

"The effect of consolidation has not yet been felt," Dr. Beeby said. "Last year saw the greatest expansion of the movement with a net gain of 16 new kindergartens and seven new associations. The situation now is no easier than it was in July last year. Today 11 recognised and two unrecognised kindergartens are without trained staff."

Of a total of 102 trainees, 83 were second-year students, but there were 185 vacancies to be filled.

Kindergartens were not the only bodies to suffer from shortage of staff. Between 1956 and 1965, 5000 additional teachers for primary and secondary schools had to be found, and in addition a replacement of 10 per cent. of existing teachers was needed each year.

"The group of people we must attract to find the teachers is the same group you need for kindergarten teachers," he said. He promised that the whole situation would be reviewed next February, but that there could not be uncontrolled expansion. A system of priorities would be enforced.

Kindergartens with permanent buildings would be considered first, the number of children available and the distance they had to travel would all be brought into consideration.

### TRAINING CENTRES.

Dr. Beeby suggested forming two training centres instead of the existing four. "The number of people available for senior training positions is not great, and the training centre buildings are far from adequate in some cases," he said.

Staffing problems came with the



DR. C. E. BEEBY

increased growth of the kindergarten movement during the past nine years, and it was important that the standard of work should not be allowed to fall. "We do not want unskilled, untrained teachers. The department sets its face against expansion which entails the use of such teachers," he said.

Dr. Beeby traced the growth of the movement since 1948. There had been an improved standard of hygiene and in many instances dreary halls had been replaced by well-equipped buildings. Programmes had improved, rigidity had been relaxed, and children had been provided with a world of activity in which each child could develop according to his natural abilities. Young people were developing a sense of career on becoming kindergarteners.

The kindergarten had become a genuine part of the educational system—not a means whereby mothers could go out to work or play bridge, as some people thought.

### IMPORTANCE

An increased number of parents had grown to believe in the importance of the first five years of a child's life.

In 1948 the Department of Education established a national scale of salaries and condition of service. From £30,000 the previous year, the salary rate rose to £61,000. In 1956 it was £309,000. The building subsidy was raised from £1 for £1 to £2 for £1. In 1948 there were 16 associations; today there are 72. One hundred and twelve new permanent buildings had been erected since 1948.

In conclusion, Dr. Beeby said the kindergarten movement was a gallant story of successes. "It is the story of the devoted work of thousands of women—and a small number of men—who think the job they are doing is worthwhile. The problems you have created are the problems of success created by your own energies. You will find the wisdom to solve them."

## Teacher and Pupil Attend Conference

Sitting among the delegates at the opening ceremony of the annual conference of the New Zealand Kindergarten Union in Hastings yesterday was a woman who took a personal pride in Dr. C. E. Beeby's position as Director of Education. She was Miss Isabel Jamieson, delegate for Hamilton.

Forty-seven years ago, Dr. Beeby was a six-year-old in her class at school. "He was a brilliant pupil—I never had to teach him anything," she said.

But Dr. Beeby had a word to say about her: "I get blamed for self-expression and 'play ways,'" he said. "But I didn't invent them—Miss Jamieson taught me!"

The Kindergarten Union has honoured Miss Jamieson for her long service in the kindergarten movement with an overseas scholarship in her name. It was awarded for the first time this year to Miss Gwen Gilbert, Auckland, director of the Ponsonby Kindergarten. Miss Gilbert will begin studies at the University of London on October 1, and will study child development under Miss D. E. M. Gardner of the Institute of Education. The scholarship is worth £400, and the Union hopes to repeat it in four years' time.

## Warm Welcome For Members of Kindergartens

A warm welcome was extended to visiting delegates at the official opening of the New Zealand Kindergarten Union's conference in Hastings yesterday.

The Assembly Hall presented a colourful sight, decorated with banks of spring flowers and shrubs for the occasion. Delegates were warm in their praise for Greater Hastings' hospitality, which took the form of a reception and afternoon tea.

The deputy-mayor, Mr. A. Kirkpatrick, officially welcomed delegates to the city. Associated with him was the president of Greater Hastings, Mr. H. B. Poppelwell; Mr. E. J. Keating, Member of Parliament for Hastings; the chairman of the Hawke's Bay Education Board, Mr. T. B. McDonald; and the president of the Hastings Free Kindergarten Association, Mrs. R. Stevenson.

The speakers were introduced by the Dominion president, Mrs. H. McCreanor, Christchurch, who also welcomed the guest speaker for the evening, the Director of Education, Dr. C. E. Beeby.

A vote of thanks was extended by a vice-president, Mrs. H. Downer, Rotorua.

After the evening's session, the union was hosted to the Hastings Free Kindergarten Association, which was responsible for all arrangements at the conference.

## Greater Rights for Teachers Granted

The Minister of Education has given authority for the New Zealand Federation of Free Kindergarten Teachers to be received as a public service association.

This was announced by the Director of Education, Dr. C. E. Beeby, at the annual conference of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union in Hastings last night.

This meant that it would have the right to direct access of negotiation with the department concerned. For the first time, teachers would have their own professional body to maintain standards and rights. For many years there has been no direct approach on these matters, he said.

Thanks To  
Mr. W. J. O'Connell

Thanks for his co-operation over so many years, and good wishes in his retirement, were extended to Mr. W. J. O'Connell, retiring clerk of the Hawke's Bay County Council, by the Hawke's Bay Electric Power Board yesterday.

Later he was appointed assistant-medical superintendent and served in that capacity for a number of years. He resigned in 1940 to take a position with a health...

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