

Plea To Keep N.Z. Kindergartens Free

A plea to keep New Zealand's kindergartens free was made by the Dominion president, Mrs. H. Downer, of Rotorua, at the annual conference of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union in Wanganui today.

No fee could be demanded for upkeep and if parents of kindergarten children did not contribute associations would have to accept the fact.

Mrs Downer was commenting on two remits, withdrawn before the conference, calling for a report on the word "free" in the title and suggesting the word be withdrawn and, if possible, a suitable word substituted.

"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 and continued Government assistance depends on strict adherence to that rule.

Other Meanings

"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 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 meanings of the 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.

Pioneer Spirit

"No one who has read the history of the 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.

"We have come a long way. We have been able to build on sure foundations, carefully laid by devoted workers whose chief concern was to provide for the social, emo-

tional 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," Mrs Downer said.



MORNING TEA FURNISHED A CHANCE for informal discussion at this morning's session of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union conference in the War Memorial Hall. Taking advantage of the break were, from left, Mr. R. A. Dickie (Auckland delegate), Mrs. H. Downer, Dominion president (Rotorua) and Miss M. F. Gallagher, director of pre-school services and a guest speaker this morning.