

EMBARGOED UNTIL

8 a.m./p.m. on 7/8/84

SPEECH NOTES

HON RUSSELL MARSHALL

ADDRESS FREE KINDERGARTEN UNION AGM

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

7.30 PM - 7 AUG 1984

TENA KOJTOU KATOA

MRS MARTIN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS YOUR 58TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE GIVES ME CONSIDERABLE PLEASURE. FIRSTLY BECAUSE IT IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE BEEN TO YOUR CONFERENCE, SECONDLY BECAUSE IT IS THE FIRST TIME THAT I HAVE ADDRESSED A CONFERENCE OF A NATIONAL ORGANISATION AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

THIRDLY, AND MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT GIVES HIGH PRIORITY TO EDUCATION AND IN PARTICULAR TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND IT IS FITTING THAT MY FIRST MAJOR ADDRESS SHOULD BE TO AN ORGANISATION WHICH PROVIDES FOR ALMOST HALF OF ALL CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION HAS THE PRIORITY WE HAVE GIVEN IT BECAUSE WE RECOGNISE THAT A CHILD'S EARLIEST YEARS ARE ITS MOST SIGNIFICANT IN TERMS OF LATER DEVELOPMENT, THE MOST VULNERABLE YEARS, THE MOST EDUCABLE YEARS.

I HAVE ALWAYS RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION THAT THE KINDERGARTEN MOVEMENT MAKES TO PROVIDING FOR THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES. I HAVE ENJOYED MANY VISITS TO KINDERGARTENS DURING MY YEARS AS OPPOSITION SPOKESPERSON ON EDUCATION AND HAVE HAD NUMEROUS VALUABLE AND USEFUL TALKS WITH KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS AND MEMBERS OF YOUR ASSOCIATIONS.

THE PRE-SCHOOL SECTOR, TOGETHER WITH OTHER SECTORS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, HAS EXPERIENCED THE EFFECTS OF RAPID SOCIAL CHANGE OVER RECENT YEARS.

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CHANGE AFFECTS US ALL, BUT MORE PARTICULARLY FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN. CHANGES IN THE NATURE AND AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, INCOME LEVELS AND HEALTH PROVISION, ALL IMPINGE UPON THE FAMILY GROUP WHEN IT IS MOST VULNERABLE - THAT IS, WHEN IT IS BECOMING ESTABLISHED.



GOVERNMENT POLICY SHOULD DISADVANTAGE YOUNG CHILDREN.  
NOR SHOULD ANY NEW POLICY BE PUT INTO PLACE UNTIL ITS  
CONSEQUENCES FOR FAMILIES HAVE FIRST BEEN ASCERTAINED. IT  
IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS ESTABLISHED A MAJOR  
NEW CABINET COMMITTEE, THE CABINET COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL EQUITY  
OF WHICH I AM CHAIRPERSON.

I KNOW THAT EARLY CHILDHOOD GROUPS, TOGETHER WITH ALL SECTORS  
OF EDUCATION, ARE RESPONDING TO THE INCREASED AWARENESS OF  
MULTI-CULTURAL ISSUES AND THE NEED TO INTRODUCE CHILDREN AND  
FAMILIES TO OTHER CULTURES WITHIN NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY. HOWEVER,  
I BELIEVE WE MUST BECOME EVEN MORE AWARE OF THE NEEDS OF MAORI  
AND PACIFIC ISLAND CHILDREN AND THE PLACE OF MAORITANGA IN  
A NEW ZEALAND HERITAGE.

THE FIRST MEETING GROUND OF MANY PARENTS WILL BE IN KINDERGARTEN. LET US BE SURE THAT THE KINDERGARTEN IN WHICH THEY COME TOGETHER IS ONE WHICH IS TOLERANT OF THEIR DIFFERENCES AND RECEPTIVE TO THEIR NEEDS. CONSIDER: HOW WELL DO THE KINDERGARTENS WITHIN YOUR ASSOCIATIONS PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES FROM DIFFERENT CULTURAL AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS? --

AS AN INDICATION OF ITS COMMITMENT TO MAORI LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, THE GOVERNMENT WILL ENCOURAGE THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF BILINGUAL AND MULTI-LINGUAL SCHOOLING AND WILL BE GIVING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO MAKING MAORI LANGUAGE AN AVAILABLE OPTION AT ALL LEVELS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM. THIS, OF COURSE, INCLUDES PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION.

TE KOHANGA REO ARE PRESENTLY PLAYING A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN PROMOTING MAORI LANGUAGE AND TAHA MAORI. THEIR AIMS ARE FULLY SUPPORTED BY THE GOVERNMENT, AND I AM GIVING CONSIDERATION TO WAYS IN WHICH THEY CAN BE BETTER ASSISTED IN THEIR OPERATION.

I KNOW THAT IN MANY DISTRICTS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION GROUPS MEET TOGETHER ON A REGULAR BASIS TO SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE WITH EACH OTHER. SOME HAVE FORMALLY CONVENED LIAISON GROUPS, WHILE OTHERS MEET INFORMALLY, BUT IN ALL, THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN IS THE FOCUS. THE MANY STRONG COMMUNITY NETWORKS WHICH HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED CAN ONLY BENEFIT THE FAMILIES AND CHILDREN THEY SERVE. AS MY COLLEAGUES AND I CONSULT WIDELY WHILE DEVELOPING OUR POLICIES, I KNOW THAT WE WILL BENEFIT FROM THE EXTENT OF THIS INTERCHANGE.



IN OUR EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT, WE UNDERTOOK TO IMPROVE AND LENGTHEN THE TRAINING OF ALL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS. I AM SURE THAT YOU WILL AGREE THAT THIS IS A GOAL THAT WOULD BENEFIT ALL CHILDREN. PRE-SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS HAVE MUCH TO LEARN FROM AND TO OFFER EACH OTHER IN THE TRAINING PROGRAMMES THEY PROVIDE.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHILDCARE TRAINING COURSES IN SOME TEACHERS COLLEGES WILL FURTHER HELP TO LOWER BARRIERS TO TRAINING AND WILL ENCOURAGE FURTHER COOPERATION AND COORDINATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION SERVICES.

I HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE GROWING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS EARLY CHILDHOOD GROUPS. SUCH COOPERATION AND COORDINATION IS IMPORTANT IN PROVIDING THE MOST APPROPRIATE SERVICE FOR A SPECIFIC COMMUNITY. THIS MAY MEAN THAT THE ESTABLISHED SERVICES CHANGE A LITTLE, OR IT MAY MEAN THE EXISTING SERVICES HELP OTHER GROUPS TO BECOME ESTABLISHED.

IT DOES NOT MEAN, HOWEVER, A LOSS OF IDENTITY. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STRONG NETWORK OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES WILL HELP TO IDENTIFY THE UNIQUENESS AND THE STRENGTH OF EACH GROUP AND FOSTER A MUTUAL RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER'S PARTICULAR IDENTITY.

AS WITH OTHER EDUCATION AGENCIES WHICH HAVE ADAPTED TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES OVER THE YEARS, THE KINDERGARTEN MOVEMENT IS ALSO CHANGING IN RESPONSE TO CHANGING NEEDS AND CIRCUMSTANCES. IN RECENT YEARS YOU HAVE EXTENDED KINDERGARTEN SESSION TIMES ON OCCASION, ESTABLISHED MOBILE KINDERGARTEN UNITS AND USED ITINERANT PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS TO REACH FAMILIES NOT RECEIVING A SERVICE.

IT IS AN IMPORTANT TASK OF KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATIONS TO TRY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES WITHIN THEIR OWN LOCALITIES AND I WAS INTERESTED TO HEAR THAT YOU ARE AT PRESENT GIVING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO CONSIDERING OTHER DIVERSE TYPES OF KINDERGARTEN PROVISION TO GIVE GREATER FLEXIBILITY TO YOUR SERVICE. I LOOK FORWARD TO BEING TOLD OF THE OUTCOME OF YOUR CONSIDERATION.

CHILDREN ARE NOW ENTERING KINDERGARTEN AT AN EARLIER AGE AND ARE STAYING LONGER. THERE ARE ADVANTAGES TO THE CHILDREN, TEACHERS AND PARENTS, OF GREATER ROLL STABILITY AND LONGER KINDERGARTEN EXPERIENCE BY ENABLING THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMME AND THE RANGE AND SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES PROVIDED TO BE MORE FULLY DEVELOPED. I THINK THAT KINDERGARTENS NEED TO LOOK FURTHER INTO PROGRAMME AND RESOURCE CHANGES NEEDED FOR THE EARLIER DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF THE YOUNGER CHILD BEING ADMITTED, AND, AT THE OTHER END OF THE SCALE, TO PROVIDE CHALLENGE AND EXTENSION FOR THOSE CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN ATTENDING KINDERGARTEN FOR CLOSE ON TWO YEARS.



THIS LEADS ME TO THE COMMITMENT THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE TO IMPROVING THE STAFFING OF KINDERGARTENS. IN OUR EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT WE SAID THAT THE AGREED STAFFING SCHEME WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN FIVE YEARS. THIS WILL DEPEND, OF COURSE, ON THE AVAILABILITY OF FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCES.

I HAVE ALREADY ASKED MY DEPARTMENT OFFICERS TO DEVELOP A DRAFT FIVE YEAR PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STAFFING IMPROVEMENTS. THIS WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF FURTHER CONSULTATION WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES AND THOSE OF THE ASSOCIATION. THERE ARE SOME PARTS WHICH STILL REQUIRE CAREFUL ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW TO ENSURE THE MOST EFFECTIVE ALLOCATION OF THE ADDITIONAL STAFF.

AMONG THOSE ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION ARE SECURITY OF TENURE, CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR STAFF, AND THE NUMBER OF TEACHERS AVAILABLE FOR EMPLOYMENT. I REPEAT THAT THE RESOLUTION OF THESE ISSUES WILL BE ACHIEVED THROUGH DISCUSSION AND CONSULTATION.

THE GOVERNMENT IS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO INVOLVING PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING AT ALL LEVELS. THE OPPORTUNITY FOR INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN IS PERHAPS GREATER DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION THAN AT ANY LATER STAGE OF EDUCATION.

IT IS OUR POLICY TO PROMOTE PROGRAMMES WHICH WILL SUPPORT PARENTS AND ASSIST THEM IN THEIR PARENTING ROLE. THE KINDERGARTEN SERVICE CAN GIVE THIS SUPPORT BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME. PARENTS NOT ONLY HELP WITH SUCH THINGS AS CHILDREN'S EXCURSIONS, THE COLLECTION OF RESOURCE MATERIALS, HELPING WITH LAUNDRY AND REPAIRS, AND WITH THE TRANSPORTING OF CHILDREN TO AND FROM KINDERGARTEN, BUT ALSO HELP BY CONTRIBUTING THEIR OWN TALENTS AND EXPERTISE TO THE PROGRAMME OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES.

THE KINDERGARTEN MOVEMENT ALSO PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION. IT IS AT THE LOCAL COMMITTEE LEVEL THAT PARENT INVOLVEMENT IS PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT FOR THE WELLBEING OF YOUR MOVEMENT.

WE ARE AT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA IN NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT. BEGINNINGS ARE EXCITING AND BRING A FRESH APPROACH AND A CHANGE OF ATTITUDES AND STYLE.

IT IS EARLY DAYS YET FOR ME AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION. MY GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT INDICATES WHERE OUR PRIORITIES LIE. TO PUT THESE INTO PRACTICE WILL REQUIRE A GREAT DEAL OF DETAILED THOUGHT, PLANNING AND CONSULTATION.

A LOT OF CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD FOR US ALL IF THE INTERESTS OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN PARTICULAR, ARE TO BE FURTHERED.



I LOOK FORWARD TO FUTURE CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUR ASSOCIATION,  
AND IN PARTICULAR WITH YOUR PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF YOUR  
EXECUTIVE.

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I HAVE VERY GREAT PLEASURE IN DECLARING THIS 58TH ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE OPEN.