

KINDERGARTEN COLLEGE PRINCIPAL TO RETIRE

Miss E. S. Hamilton, principal of the Kindergarten Student Training College since 1947, is to retire at the end of the year, it has just been announced by the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association.

Miss Hamilton has been a prominent figure in kindergarten affairs since she first came to Dunedin from Wellington in 1941 as director of the Helen Deem Pre-school Centre.

Before coming here Miss Hamilton had taught in Wellington, where she did her kindergarten training in 1932, and had also spent two years overseas furthering her training and experience in pre-school education, taking the advanced course in child development at the University of London Institute of Education under the late Dr Susan Issacs, a world figure in pre-school education.

Through Dr Isaacs, Miss Hamilton was able to visit many leading specialists in this field in the United States on her homeward journey, she recalled yesterday.

NEW SCHOOL

On her return Miss Hamilton was approached concerning the establishment of what was to become the Helen Deem Pre-school Centre in

Dunedin, and with much assistance from the late Dr Helen Deem, then medical advisor to the Plunket Society, who instigated the idea, Miss Hamilton established the centre in the grounds of the Karitane Hospital, its purpose being to assist with the training of kindergarten students in child health, and Plunket nurses in the understanding of the pre-school child.

Miss Hamilton was director for five years, from 1941, and during that period was sent to Australia with the assistance of the Education Department and the Kindergarten Association, to investigate the latest developments in this field in order to advise on the new building for the centre, which was eventually built in Forbury Road in 1954.

By that time Miss Hamilton had become principal of the college, taking over from Miss Anne Duthie, the former principal.

"At that time really

didn't have a college at all. Lectures were held in the Pioneer Womens Memorial Hall and my office was in an adjacent building."

In 1950 the college had its first premises in the former McIndoe home in MacAndrew Road, and it remained there for 11 years until the former Speight home in York Place was purchased in 1961, a central position in a lovely setting for the present college and student training centre.

GREAT GROWTH

During the past 20 years Miss Hamilton has seen a tremendous growth in the kindergarten movement and

feels it has been a most rewarding time to have been principal with the establishment of eight new kindergartens in the area and the building of many fine new premises.

She has greatly appreciated the support at all times of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association and all the voluntary workers associated with it, working so hard to raise funds as well as keeping the work of the kindergarten and pre-school education before the public.

The Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association has shown interest in all aspects of the college.

"Without this support and hard work our college would not have grown in strength and quality of education as it has."

The college depended for its existence on the backing of all those interested in pre-school education, this including mothers who have supported their kindergartens so wholeheartedly and staffs of both kindergartens and the college itself, Miss Hamilton said.

Of the greatest assistance to Miss Hamilton, and to the college as a whole, has been the fact that she has had such a stable staff, both Miss J. M. Stewart and Miss P. M. Varcoe, who is to be the next principal, having been on the staff for almost 20 years also.

"I have given outstanding service and devotion to the college," she said.

STAFF OF THREE

When she began there was a full time staff of three (including herself) and although that number remains the same, the part time lecturers have increased greatly and today there are eight appointed to assist with the training programme.

The path had been laid for the progress of the college and the advancement of student training through Miss Duthie and her staff, Miss Hamilton said, and she had

particularly valued Miss Duthie's advice and assistance in her first years as principal.

Miss Hamilton has seen almost 300 girls pass through the college, 11 graduating in her first year, the number having risen to 22 last year. As in other fields the standards of qualification for students had risen over the years and it was now necessary to have School Certificate.

Asked if the emphasis on training had changed over the years, Miss Hamilton said that there had been a change in the amount of time a student now spends

in discussions and study within the college, with 7 per cent. of the hours in the year spent in college and 2 in practice in kindergartens.

Earlier training had been more equal, with six weeks in college and six weeks in practical experience with children in the kindergartens.

Also subjects were not dealt with in more depth which naturally require more time in college for the girls' basic theoretical understanding of the subject, so that they will be well equipped to practise their teaching skills.

APPRECIATION

Miss Hamilton expressed her "deep appreciation of the wonderful support at all times" of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association education committee, which administers the college, and of the help and advice received from various professional people, from the Otago University, the Otago Polytechnic, the Dunedin Teachers College and the School of Physical Education.

Looking to the future, Miss Hamilton envisages a marked development in the study of the child from pre-school years to the age of eight as the trend is towards broadening the age group for study, and she looks towards an even closer liaison between kindergarten and infant teacher.

"I can see a rosy future for the college because of the large number of applicants over the last few years. This will continue to grow, and the college will take an even more important part in the education world."

With Miss Varcoe as principal, Miss Hamilton feels the college is in very capable hands.

As for Miss Hamilton's own future, beyond the fact that she will continue to take an interest in the progress of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association with whom she has served so many happy years, she has no immediate plans other than that she will continue to make her home in Dunedin.

She will relinquish her position at the end of January.

MISS E. S. HAMILTON, retiring principal of the Kindergarten Student Training Centre.

Retiring Principal's 'Going Away' Gift

Members of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association are determined that Miss Elizabeth Hamilton, the retiring principal of the Kindergarten Teachers Training College, should have a holiday. On Saturday night, in the Savoy at the students' graduation ceremony, Miss Hamilton was presented with a large suitcase.

However it was not just one suitcase—tucked in that was another and inside that a third matching suitcase.

Mrs G. Snell, the president of the association, who made the presentation, said Miss Hamilton had never been known to have had a holiday, even during weekends and term vacations, and now that she was retiring there was

no excuse for her not to use the suitcases.

Miss Hamilton was also given a pair of cultured pearl earrings set in marcasite and a watch. These gifts, the committee felt, were only a small recognition of the thanks and appreciation they owed Miss Hamilton.

This year, 15 girls received their teaching diplomas from Mrs A. N. Haggitt, and Mrs R. A. Kennedy, president of the Combined Mothers Club presented the club's annual awards to Miss Lynda Wardrop, the top junior student and Miss Lynley Anderson, the top senior student for

the year. Miss Anderson won the junior award last year.

The guest speaker was Miss Hamilton, who talked to representatives of various kindergarten committees, lecturers from the college, parents, graduates, some of whom travelled from Gore, Winton, Christchurch and Oamaru.

She spoke on some of the developments which had taken place over the last 25 years and also on the possibilities for the future.

HELEN DEEM CENTRE

"In looking back, one of the important and far-reaching developments has been the establishment and growth of the Helen Deem Centre," she said.

"This was made possible only through the close co-operation of two organisations whose common goal is working for the welfare of young children and of parents—the Dominion Plunket Society and the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association.

"The Helen Deem Centre is a training centre for Plunket nurses in training and for Kindergarten and Karitane trainees in the educational needs, health and nutrition of pre-school children. Weekly clinics are also held for medical students."

Miss Hamilton said that after studying in London she returned to New Zealand and was asked to be the first director of what was then called the pre-centre school in Dunedin.

"The centre opened in the small and attractive mothercraft cottage in the grounds of the Truby King-Harris Hospital at Andersons Bay in 1941.

"Twenty-five children were enrolled. The staff comprised a director, and later an assistant, and a part-time sister."

TEAMWORK

"It was teamwork from the beginning and I pay a warm tribute to the memory of the late Dr Helen Deem who was at the time medical adviser to the Plunket Society and who worked closely with me in her professional capacity. These could have been her own children, so interested was she in helping each one individually."

It was evident with the rising number of trainees, a new building specially equipped for the purpose was required and in 1954, the Helen Deem Centre was opened with funds raised by the two societies and a subsidy from the Government.

"From this centre, students are gaining valuable knowledge concerning the needs of healthy, normal children which will help them in their various spheres of work with children and parents throughout New Zealand," Miss Hamilton said.

"I hope the time will come when those working in the medical and health fields for young children will be given more opportunity to spend

greater time studying the psychological and educational aspects of this age group."

With the increased quota of students in 1950 came the need for a more spacious and permanent building in a central location for the training of students and in 1961, the premises in York place were taken over.

"The improved facilities as well as providing very adequately for training has proved a meeting ground for area and regional conferences, association gatherings, staff refresher courses and Combined Mothers Club meetings," she said.

"This has tended to bring the people administering and working to the kindergartens into closer liaison with those working in the college."

The two-year training course for the students lays a basic foundation of knowledge and training skills. Many are aware by the time they reach the end of their second year that there is a need for more advanced study. Encouragement is given to the graduates to further their studies by attending lectures at the University.

Miss Hamilton felt that the organisation should press for integration of kindergarten teacher training with that of infant teacher training and

the whole course should be extended for three years.

One of the main problems facing the college is that kindergarten students are unable to gain entrance to hostels. Some of the second-year students manage reasonably well in flats, but others are struggling to keep up with the domestic demands, their study and social life.

"Most of our students come from outside Dunedin and the college staff and association are ever-mindful of this," Miss Hamilton said.

"In the Dunedin association, in the work of the area

and in the community, I have enjoyed the challenge which this profession has held for me," she said. "The pioneers of this work have in much more difficult times laid the foundations for such progress. My generation and future generations will, I hope, never lose sight of the sacrifices and high aspirations of those pioneers."

Miss V. A. Hayward moved a vote of thanks to Miss Hamilton. Entertainment was provided by the students choir, which was conducted by Mrs Lorna Brown and accompanied by Mrs F. Bruce.