

PRESIDENT'S OPENING REMARKS

CONFERENCE 1963

What I have to say to you this morning will be something of a mixed grill. It represents some aspects of my thinking, observation and experience over the past few years.

First, the question of the relationship of associations and their staff, which you may well say is not my concern. But in the course of my visits to associations it often happens, particularly when a first or new kindergarten is being opened, that members of staff approach me with questions or seek advice on certain aspects of their employment and officers of the association ask me the same questions or ones bearing on those raised by their staff. Frequently, too, I receive requests for clarification of certain matters from the Kindergarten Teachers' Association. All this points to situations which can be the cause of misunderstanding and unhappiness on both sides.

Having been actively associated with the opening of seven new kindergartens in this area in the past two and a half years, I am very familiar with the heavy administrative responsibility which must be shouldered by the Council and local committees to ensure that a new kindergarten makes a good start and that the long-awaited service is presented to the community in a manner that will reach its high expectations. There are bound to be some disappointments, but these can be reduced to a minimum if proper thought and preparation have been given to the needs of the staff at this time, if the association knows its functions as the employing body and the staff is thoroughly familiar with the terms of its employment, if the kindergarten, its grounds and equipment are really ready for the service to begin.

How many associations, I wonder, even those with long-established kindergartens, are completely confident of their knowledge of the Kindergarten Regulations in terms of the definition of the weekly schedule, of regulations governing leave of absence, of their own rules and by-laws for Council, local committees and staff. How many of them are familiar with the salary scale, how clear are their records of staff absences and dates of increment for individual staff members. There can be much heart-burning and even recrimination when errors occur in calculation of salary payments. If there is any doubt about the accuracy of a salary I would suggest that you underpay. It is a much happier situation to write another cheque than to make a deduction from one.

I would also like to recommend to those associations where this is not already the practice, that, at the beginning of each year, preferably in the first week, but certainly in the first month, a meeting be arranged for officers of the association and staff, and if possible and where this applies, chairmen of local committees. This gives an opportunity to welcome new staff members, explain the association's rules, give details of staff obligations to committees and allow staff to ask questions and make requests which will assist their work in your kindergarten. I can assure you, from my own experience, that this procedure pays dividends.

And now the next item - the role of parents in kindergarten. We all know that people work best when there is a goal to reach. When the goal is a material one, such as establishing a kindergarten in a permanent building, the task is comparatively easy and enthusiasm is quickly kindled, but when it becomes intangible - that is a different story. In many cases the hard work of establishing a kindergarten is over. Those who were associated with it have moved on to give their service to the schools which their children now attend and a new generation of parents, with no knowledge of the sacrifices involved and perhaps little understanding of the real purpose of pre-school education, reap the benefits. Some, by no means all, take them for granted.

I came across an apt description of our life and times recently - "The age of the shrug". None of us is immune from it and some people suffer more seriously than others from its effects. When it affects parents of children attending kindergarten it presents a challenge to us

to overcome the difficulties that arise from it.

There is constant need to bring to the notice of parents the manner in which the kindergarten functions and the responsibilities which the association controlling it must accept. There is an equally heavy task for the staff to perform to ensure that parents realise how important they are in the lives of their pre-school children and how much pleasure they can give their children and themselves if they participate in the kindergarten programme. If we cast our minds back to our own childhood we remember the strong sense of security that came from our parents. Children of today are no different from those of any other time except that their need for security is greater in our rapidly-changing world, with its ever-present tensions.

Closely linked with the role of parents in kindergarten is that of the Union, since in these times, the majority of members in every association is made up of parents of pre-school children. From the earliest times in our movement it was realised that some form of co-operation between groups working for kindergarten in widely-scattered areas was needed to co-ordinate and strengthen their efforts. The first attempts were frustrated by World War I, but were later successful in 1926. From that time, now nearly 40 years ago, regular meetings of kindergarten associations have been held to advance the work, until today we take it for granted that each year there will be an opportunity for discussion and report on the Union's activities. The Union has become the strength on which all associations may draw and the body recognised by Government as representing all associations in discussions with the Minister of Education on matters of kindergarten policy. How much do we take for granted in the Union? How much do we each contribute towards its needs? What is to be its future?

At one time the Union Executive was made up of Presidents of all affiliated associations, until their numbers made this system unwieldy. We then moved to the present pattern of an Executive partly elected and partly appointed, with a salaried officer as Secretary-Treasurer. Although the Constitution provides for the Executive to appoint this officer on such terms as it may prescribe, it has become accepted that the Secretary will reside in the home town of the President.

Now that all associations make an equal contribution to the administration cost of training, based on the number of recognised kindergartens under their control, it is possible that the time has come to revise the manner in which the Executive is set up and to consider whether all its members should be elected. Has the time also come, when one considers the heavy responsibilities carried by the President and the Union office, to plan for a permanent office, with no regard for the home town of the President.

There is a feeling in some quarters that the future strength of the Union will come from a complete change in its present form and that there is urgent need for development of regional authorities within the Union. Let us look back over the past ten or twelve years to the time when meetings of associations in neighbouring areas first began - meetings that came to be called regional. In my experience they began as a means of sharing problems and knowledge among members of new associations in the days of rapid expansion and little experience. They served an invaluable purpose, they built up friendships and they strengthened the Union of Associations, but they imposed no hardship and little expense on those who took part in them, and their informality was the reason for their success. Gradually they have grown bigger, more formal, certainly more expensive and involving far more sacrifice on the part of those who attend. With efforts being made to solve the problem of the mounting cost of administration to the Training Associations and to evolve a system whereby these costs could be more equitably distributed there developed regional councils in University areas. Have these councils now achieved their purpose? Should they then continue to function? Should they form the beginnings of regional authorities within the Union? Would this strengthen the Union or would it dissipate its powers? I believe that the informal regional meetings, where neighbouring associations come together for exchange of ideas and sharing of problems, have a definite place in the Union, but I am not sure of the need to go beyond this simple system in a movement where the constant concern is to ease the burden

of administrative responsibility. Working for the welfare of little children is the happiest and most rewarding service one can give to a community. We must be sure when we plan for its future that we do not dampen the spirit and lose the enthusiasm of its voluntary supporters.

The Executive, being aware of the trend towards larger and more costly regional meetings, has prepared a report which will be distributed to the Conference after my remarks.

This is your Union - you are the Union. That is apt to be forgotten. It is not just the President and the Executive, who merely act, with a deep sense of responsibility, on your behalf and on your instructions. The Union is and will be what you want it to be through the opinions you express and the decisions you take concerning it. The matters I have raised deserve your most earnest consideration.

MISS GALLAGHER

Miss Gallagher said that for some years she had regarded her annual address to conference more or less as an unofficial annual report, and there were times when she was able to tell us about things that were good and times that she was able to tell us about difficulties that she foresaw as possible; but more and more over the years that function has become a dwindling one, because the Union is now so aware of the developments that she must now change her role. Miss Gallagher said that she considered the Executive Report the most comprehensive picture possible in the circumstances. The facts as they are known to the Union are very much the same as they are known to her.

One of the most extraordinary things in education has been the development of pre-school education. There has been not only growth in numbers. Twenty years ago there were only 37 or 38 kindergartens, today there are 235. Not only has there been expansion in terms of coverage and services offered, but enormous progress has been made by associations in putting things right, in improving efforts made previously and in setting the stage so that the best possible work could be done.

The standards of accommodation are very good indeed. They are the envy of other countries overseas. All this is due to the associations and parents in that it has all been done by their own efforts. As long as fifteen years ago about one kindergarten in four was in permanent accommodation. The remainder were in rented premises of all kinds. But the position today is very different. There are only about three kindergartens throughout the country that are in accommodation that is not entirely suitable.

Standards of care and maintenance are very high indeed. It is the committees who bear the burden of most of that work. Through the country they take pride in keeping their buildings in good condition, and the general condition of the grounds means that the kindergartens are something of which this country can be very proud. Equipment is well up to the very high standard set by ourselves.

Educational programmes have kept up with the material side of the work. In a UNESCO report figures were given showing comparisons of pre-school education through the world. Variations were very great indeed, but our standard of programme compared most favourably and are surprisingly uniform. The movement has been recruiting teachers as fast as possible, so that there is a large proportion of inexperienced teachers. Where programmes are not so good, it is nearly always because of youth and inexperience.

The kind of broad, free programme, making provision for indoor and outdoor play with a wide range of activities, is in line with the best educational thinking in the world. The fact that children are just free to do what they want does not spell licence, it does not mean that discipline is lacking. The direction of discipline of the free programme is that it comes from the environment itself, made up by the people and the building. Children are free to choose their activities. There are disciplines attached to that. If they are going to paint they paint on

the easels. They take turns. They give way to others when finished. The child who wishes to build may build what he wants and draw others in with him. If he can look to the adult for the stimulation he needs, he is able to develop his own talents. The kindergarten movement can take justifiable pride in having provided this environment for so many thousands of our children in kindergartens scattered throughout the country - pride of achievement rather than pride of comparison with other people attempting to do the same job.

Miss Gallagher went on to recall the difficulties experienced in the past by several associations whose position at times seemed almost hopeless. The thing that really amazed her is that the kindergarten movement has somehow kept its kindergartens staffed in spite of almost impossible difficulties. In this connection there are several factors that should be considered. First we are not alone in this difficulty. All other fields of education are short of staff too. In every occupation this has applied. The kindergarten movement has had its fair share.

In 1951 Cabinet decided to put a brake on expansion and a rule was made that no new kindergarten would be opened in any association unless it had all its existing kindergartens fully staffed. The next step was amalgamation introduced to strengthen overall management.

In 1956 the expansion of kindergartens was brought to a complete halt by the introduction of what became known as the period of consolidation. This was introduced for staffing reasons only. During 1956 to 1958 this had a definitely favourable effect on the kindergarten movement. The trend of previous years had been changed. Where before the movement was a little bit worse off every year, after 1956 it became a little better off all the time.

Since 1961 there has been another "deep-freeze". That is a most disappointing blow to local community groups working hard and waiting for permission to go ahead. But what does it profit a community to get a new kindergarten if it does so by taking staff from another? How does it help the movement as a whole if new kindergartens are opened at the expense of other kindergartens unable to obtain staff?

Earlier in the year it was agreed that the staffing position was not good enough to go straight ahead, but the "plans only" scheme could be re-introduced. At the present time of the nine kindergartens invited to submit plans none is ready to go ahead. The Director decided that he would recommend to the Minister that no decision would be made until the beginning of next year. Prospects for the beginning of next year are good. Prospects for the future are good. We have not been taking one step forward and two steps back.

This is what lies ahead. We have at the present time some 86 vacancies, and about 109 are expected to get a diploma. That 86 will grow between now and February. It looks as if we will start February in a better position for staff than ever before. There is one thing that still leaves the position a little difficult to predict. It was hoped that we would get back into the service before very long girls who left years ago. It is too early yet to tell what that effect will be.

Staff problems have not occurred because the rate of loss has been too high. The rate of loss is no greater than that in the primary service. Staff losses are unfortunately only too often the result of lack of understanding between staff and associations as employers. There are girls who go who would not otherwise do so, but who leave simply because these girls have not fully understood how they should behave as staff and sometimes they have not been helped to understand either.

Now that higher qualifications are sought we can look for fewer staff problems. In 1957 the Union asked for School Certificate as a minimum qualification. In 1958 that qualification was re-affirmed. It had now reached the stage where the four training associations will be asked that this year at least 50% of the girls shall have School Certificate and that each year this should be raised progressively until everybody has it.

Miss Gallagher concluded by saying that the movement must find a way of keeping a small hard core of very well-qualified people to give the very young staff the leadership and guidance that they will need in the future.

Mr Carter moved a vote of thanks to Miss Gallagher, which was carried by acclamation.

Miss Hayward expressed concern that it would not be possible to notify girls of their acceptance for training until after School Certificate results were known.

Miss Gallagher said that she felt that some scheme should be able to be worked out to alleviate this situation.

The President then read a report from Miss Varcoe, holder of the I. M. Jamieson Scholarship. Miss Varcoe had applied for a further year's leave to take up a position either in England or America. This had been granted and Miss Varcoe has accepted a position at the Gloucestershire Teachers' Training College.

She had passed her examinations at Birmingham University, and if her Dissertation was approved, she would return to New Zealand with the Diploma in the Psychology of Childhood.

MR H. STALKER A.N.Z.I.A.

Mr Stalker had been invited to address conference to answer questions on architect - committee relationships and architects' responsibilities.

Correct approach to an architect to engage his services

I would suggest that the correct approach should be to select an architect from those available in the district to give you the type of building which you want. Every architect has a flair for certain types of design. It is no good going to a contemporary architect for a building in period style. The committee select an architect, then make an informal approach to him to see if he will accept the commission. The formal approach should be made by the controlling body. The appointment must come from the body that is going to pay the accounts and control the architect. That letter should be sent from the committee and should be part of the committee's records.

The architect should acknowledge it and that is all that is required.

The second point is the relationship between the association, the architect and the builder. This is very important where you have a controlling committee and a local committee. The architect can only take instructions from the committee that appointed him. As the representative of that committee his powers are given to him by the committee and it is his duty to do what the committee wants, what he is told to do and to advise the committee on what he considers is the best way of overcoming any of their problems. The committee must exercise any control over the architect they feel they should.

Any instructions which the committee desires to place before the builder should be given in writing to the architect and in no circumstances should a direct approach be made to the builder. That cannot be stressed too fully.

If the architect does not issue the instruction the committee cannot expect the architect to take responsibility for the outcome. Where we have an over-ruling committee the correct approach if a local committee sees something they want incorporated is that they should approach the parent committee. The parent committee should issue the instruction to the architect and the architect hand it over to the builder.

Progress Payments to the Contractor

No payments should be made unless the architect has issued a certificate to the committee stating the exact amount which should be paid. Quite often the builder may consider he is entitled to more than the architect does. The committee must be careful that the payments are made only on the certificate; the architect is then entirely responsible.

Fees for Architects' Services

These are laid down by the Institute of Architects as a minimum scale. An architect can charge more, but he cannot charge less than the scale. An allowance can be made for repetitive work. You could not expect to go to an architect, hand him a commission for the first kindergarten he has designed and expect him to do the work for the same fee as an architect who had designed several kindergartens for the one association.

Quite often when the committee is raising funds to launch the kindergarten offers are made from local firms for materials and sometimes for labour, and I have been asked to comment on how these can best fit into the contract. The material one is easy. You tell the architect what material is donated or will be donated. It is written into the contract that certain timbers will be supplied.

The labour one becomes fairly difficult in that to ask a building contractor to carry out some work with labour over which he has no control is fraught with danger and should be avoided. The offer should be applied to work at the end of the building contract on outside work.

Glare from concrete surfaces immediately outside glass areas

There is little or nothing that can be done once the concrete is down except sealing with tar and sand. If finance is available when the concrete is being put down it could be treated as an exposed concrete aggregate, but it is costly.

Assessment of difficulties arising from buildings with flat roofs

Difficulties have arisen in the past due to the materials available for flat roofs in that they never lasted out their guarantee period. In the last three years there have been excellent flat roofing materials coming on the market in New Zealand. They have been used for years overseas and have proved entirely satisfactory. There is a Brownbilt roof manufactured by Fletchers, a 20 gauge galvanised iron material folded to give it strength to span large distances between purlins, which does away with sarking. From the point of view of cost this brings the flat roof back very close to the cost of the normal pitched iron roof. This has been used extensively in Rotorua and if it will stand up here it will stand up anywhere.

There are other types of material for flat roofing and there is no reason why they should not be satisfactory, although they require sarking, closer spacing of roofing, and that would probably be more expensive.

There is no reason for any leak or trouble to occur. If it does it can be attributed to poor detailing or faulty supervision by the architect in that he has not kept a close enough eye on the roofing contract.

Government departments have accepted Brownbilt roofing. They are replacing fabric roofing on schools with it.

We don't know whether the Department will accept it for kindergarten work; we hope they will because a flat roof does free the planning of the area below it.

The obligation is on the architect to obtain information on local body by-laws. When planning and administering the contract it is fairly self-evident that it is the architects' duty to obtain all the relevant information necessary to carry out the building contract. In terms

of the contract documents he transfers the responsibility for permits and compliance with the by-laws on to the building contractor, so that there should never, unless a new by-law has been passed, be any additional charge to the committee through wrong design from the point of view of by-laws. If it does, it should be the responsibility of the architect to cover the cost.

Mrs Downer expressed the appreciation of the conference to Mr Stalker for giving so much useful information.

P.T.O.