

FILE 75/2/1

# Kindergarten Movement

## 4 OCT 1961 Consolidation

No new proposals for free kindergartens will be accepted by the Department of Education or approved by the Government as from October 1, 1961.

CHCH. PRESS

This decision of the Minister of Education (Mr Tennent) was announced by the Director of Education (Mr A. E. Campbell) at the official opening of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union's conference in Christchurch last evening. The Minister was unable to attend.

Kindergarten associations in the union would be allowed to proceed with kindergartens for which plans had been received and discussed by the department, Mr Campbell said.

The securing of a trained kindergarten director would remain an essential requirement for the recognition of a new kindergarten.

During the period of consolidation, but for no longer, the department would continue to pay the salaries for kindergartens already recognised but without trained staff, subject to the condition that the responsible associations continue to make every effort to secure trained directors, he said.

Subsidy payments would continue to be made on the cost of buildings. The policy would be reviewed in a year's time, after careful examination of the staffing position, said Mr Campbell.

"The recognition of the kindergartens for which plans have been received by the department will doubtless be spread out over a period of a couple of years or so and the additional strain on staffing will, therefore, make itself felt rather gradually," he said.

### Solid Protection

"On the other hand, the period of consolidation will provide solid protection against a continuing deterioration of the staffing situation. It is hard to estimate how long the new period of consolidation will need to be maintained.

"We do not know whether the high rate of staff loss between last December and last February was a freak occurrence or the beginning of a trend of higher loss.

"What is obvious is that it was never more important for the union and kindergarten associations to do all they can to hold staff, to attract kindergarten teachers back to the service, and to recruit students for training," Mr Campbell said.

### Staff Loss

Kindergarten staff loss between December, 1960, and January, 1961, was the highest known. It amounted to a loss of 20 per cent., he said. Although new staff entered the service from training centres at the beginning of

the year, it was only 1.7 per cent., whereas the net gain from one year to the next had ranged for many years from 10 per cent. to 17 per cent.

"The whole situation was very fully discussed with representatives of the union in March," he said. "They recognised that the outlook for further expansion was bleak; but they thought it might be possible to get back into the service teachers not then working in kindergartens. To enable an effort to be made, they asked the Minister to defer till September his decision on the number of kindergartens that could proceed this financial year. This the Minister agreed to do.

"With the director of Pre-School Services (Miss M. Gallagher), I met your president (Mrs H. Downer) and Mrs F. B. Keys, an executive member of the union, last Friday to review the situation once again.

"We had to agree that although the staffing line has been held—that is to say, the loss of trained teachers since February last has been very fact remained that staffing was no better now than it had been in March," he said.

### Predicament

If no kindergartens had been allowed to proceed, that would have amounted to declaring a new period of consolidation retrospectively, he said.

To allow even a token number to go ahead would, under this present policy of controlled expansion, have deprived some kindergartens already recognised but unable to get trained staff of the life line of salary payments from the department.

It would also have left the remainder, for which plans had been received in the department, deeply disappointed and with little hope for next year or the year after.

"We, in the department, were very concerned, as were the representatives of the union, about the kindergartens on the union's priority list for which we have received and discussed plans," he said. "There are 15 of these; and we know that some of the associations from

whom the department has received plans have been ready and waiting for two years or more. Most of the associations had been very actively working for a kindergarten for quite a time before that."

### Recommendation

Mr Campbell said he told the union representatives that he was prepared to recommend the Minister to declare a new period of consolidation, but to allow those kindergartens for which plans have been received and discussed by the department to proceed.

"Your representatives concerned in the proposal and the Minister have authorised me to tell you this evening that he has agreed to it," he said.

If there were problems and disappointments—even frustrations—for the union, there were also big achievements to record. All who worked in or for kindergartens could regard these achievements with modest pride.

The New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union had, since its inception more than 30 years ago, filled its role faithfully and well.

From the beginning it had stood for good educational standards, good standards in personal relations in the kindergarten, in the practical understanding of small children, in the programmes provided for them, in buildings and equipment, said Mr Campbell.

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