



Officially opened last night, business sessions of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union's conference started this morning. Shown here are, from left, Miss M. F. Gallagher, supervisor of pre-school services; Mrs A. F. Johnson, president of the Christchurch Free Kindergarten Association; and Mrs H. Downer, president of the New Zealand Union.

## Consolidation to Halt Kindergarten Growth

**K**INDERGARTENS for which plans have been received and discussed by the Department of Education will be allowed to proceed, despite a new "period of consolidation," the Director of Education (Mr A. E. Campbell) told the annual Dominion conference of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union last night.

Staffing existing kindergartens had deteriorated.

The loss of staff between last December and February was the highest ever known—20 per cent, he said.

New staff had begun at the beginning of the year. But while the net gain from one year to the next normally ranged from 10 per cent to 17 per cent, on this occasion it was only 1.7 per cent.

### Discussed

"The whole situation was very fully discussed with representatives of the union in March," Mr Campbell said.

"They recognised that the

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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."

Last Friday, said Mr Campbell, he had told the union's representatives that he would recommend the Minister to declare a new period of consolidation, but to allow those kindergartens for which plans had been received and discussed by the department to proceed.

Union representatives concurred in the proposal, and the Minister had agreed to it, Mr Campbell said.

It was hard to estimate how long the new period of consolidation would need to be maintained, Mr Campbell said.

"We do not know whether the high rate of staff loss 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 the associations to do all they could to hold staff, to attract kindergarten teachers back to the service, and to recruit students for training."

Concern for the "wasteful overlapping" of services that has occurred and could occur between New Zealand's two pre-school movements, the Kindergarten Union and the Federation of Play Centres, was expressed by Mr Campbell.

### 'Satisfaction'

"I have spoken to-night of the movement's major worry.

"But we should not be so preoccupied with the staffing problems some kindergartens have, and with the obstacles in the way of establishing new kindergartens, that we take no satisfaction in what we already have," Mr Campbell remarked.

"If there are problems and disappointments, even frustrations, there are also large achievements to record—and all those who work in or for the kindergartens can very properly regard those achievements with a modest pride."