

MISS GALLAGHER.

Miss Gallagher said that she appreciated very much the invitation received from the Union to speak at this conference, because she had come to regard this talk as a kind of unofficial annual report, or to some extent giving an account of her stewardship, offering comment from one who stands further away from the movement than associations and one who, therefore, perhaps can see things in perspective more deeply than those caught up in the day to day problems of kindergartens.

"This year of 1962 has been a year of consolidation and of progress that has been so steadily maintained over the last years. We have not seen any spectacular gains but rather a deepening of understanding and furthering of the work that associations undertake willingly, and a going-ahead with confidence and with renewed determination. Some of the things have been mentioned already in the President's remarks and in the Executive Report.

"There has been the introduction of a bond at the request of the Union. I would like to say that, judging by what has happened in the past, the number of teachers whose service will be affected by the bond will be very small. There are very few cases recorded in the service where a girl has given less than two years' service. I looked over the file on which is recorded the name of every girl who has obtained her diploma since 1953. A survey for three years showed that 60% of the teachers who have been trained since 1953 have given at least three years' service. A further 20% have given at least three years' broken service. These are mainly girls who marry or go overseas. 81% of all students have given at least three years' service or more. Of the remaining 19% the number who left to go to other work is very small indeed. Through the introduction of the bond it will be possible to see that all who train give at least two years' service or be penalised to the extent of the proportion of the bond at the time they leave.

"I think this is a good thing. Those who leave and give no service at all are clearly girls who do not realise the time and energy and money put into their training and do not realise that they have a moral obligation to give service in return for the training they receive. It will be interesting to see the effect of the bond.

"I would like to tell you now of the representations made by the Union for bursaries under the bursary regulations. Representations have been made to the Director to secure the same bursaries for kindergarten teachers as for primary school teachers. This will be introduced for the benefit of teachers who can perhaps take only one unit at University. The question of the possibility of offering bursaries to kindergarten students, to enable them to attend Universities, is before the Minister at the present time.

"Another matter of interest and importance is the attendance of one of your most experienced and valued members, Mrs Johnson, at the OMEP Conference, a world conference on child education, as a representative of the N. Z. Government, to speak for New Zealand and pre-school services and to learn from those who are attending from other countries. Mrs Johnson had been asked to furnish a report to the Minister, and this is looked forward to with great interest and I am sure that it can be made available to the Union.

"The thorny question of salaries. The Kindergarten Teachers' Association, speaking on its own behalf, first made rather informal representations to the Department in 1958. It was a very unfavourable time for considering a request for a review on salaries. In 1959 the teachers submitted a case, but consideration of their claims has been deferred and deferred. There had been a considerable number of salary reviews going on and it was felt in the Department that a review of kindergarten scale at the same time might not be in the best interests of kindergarten teachers. Teachers, however, have gained from each review that has taken place for all people in public and related services. The case can now be considered on its own merits.

"Equal pay was given to teachers in two steps, 1 April last and 1 April next. Following that the Minister got in touch with the Kindergarten Teachers' Association because the scale submitted was very similar to the new rates now operative. He invited them to re-consider their submission. The Minister has advised the Teachers' Association that that is now going through all the processes. I had hoped to have something to report at this conference.

"The Minister proposes that there will be negotiation between the Department and Kindergarten Teachers' Association to arrive at a scale acceptable to both. This is a big step forward, much more important than the actual literal gain. The Kindergarten Teachers' Association is now able to speak for and negotiate on behalf of their own organisation, which puts them fully on their feet as a grown professional body.

Amalgamation:

"The most recent move towards amalgamation was in Taranaki where Stratford has joined South Taranaki.

Members of associations where amalgamation has taken place will now be able to appraise gains and difficulties and will be able to give advice to other associations considering such a move.

Period of Consolidation:

"It is astonishing the way in which one uses words full of meaning to explain something and after a while it becomes a name.

"When the first halt was called in 1956 it was called a "period of consolidation". It has been shown that it is very much in the interest of the movement that both these halts should have been called. In 1956, when the staffing position was coming to a critical point, the Minister decided that the only thing to do was to stop expansion for a while. It is quite clear to anybody who examines the figures and is watching the progress of staffing that this did exactly what was hoped. Gains were small but definite. The position had got to the stage where a new kindergarten opening sometimes forced another one to go into recess for the time being. Some associations had built their kindergartens with the hope that they would get staff from somewhere. After this period of consolidation had been running for two years the position became a little better every year. When it was possible to forecast an improvement it was decided by the Minister that the rate of expansion should be controlled, and it was possible to keep the thing moving at a rate which did not endanger staffing. Last year the same steps had to be taken again and kindergarten expansion brought to a standstill. Those who have met requirements and have a kindergarten on the Union's priority list must be impatient indeed. But the situation is such that it would defeat the object of the steps already taken if the period did not go on for some little while yet. The position is that we are down again to the point where over 25% of all positions are filled by untrained staff. That is much too high for the preservation of standards. Since December last and up to the end of July, 87 teachers have resigned from the service and there are only 89 to come out of training centres this year. In those 7 months the loss was practically equal to the number of teachers available for the service. We will lose more teachers as the year goes on.

"Probably by the end of the year over 100 will have left. We are going to be worse off at the end of this year than at the end of last year. The loss in the kindergarten service is not a steady one because the number of teachers is too small. Very few who left this year have left for reasons that you would not regard as proper. Because of expansion the actual number of people who left is greater. It simply means that the number of students taken into colleges is not large enough to keep the position steady. Associations throughout the country have made valiant efforts in recruitment drives. It remains to be seen what will be the result of those very fine efforts.

"We can ask why, if the effort to recruit sufficient teachers is not what was hoped, what is the cause. One can say salaries, perhaps, but there are others who will say kindergarten girls think they are well paid. It is not easy to get other jobs now. I believe that the greatest challenge facing the movement is recruiting and training enough teachers. Even more important is recruiting sufficient people of the right type. One of the reasons we are not more successful in recruiting is that we are recruiting girls with too low a standard of qualifications. Making a deliberate move towards higher entrance qualifications would perhaps be the greatest benefit of all at the present time.

"Another reason is the question of the disciplining of staff. A clear cut policy should be defined on rules for staff employed by the association and consistent carrying out of those rules. One of the reasons why some of the girls leave is because of the heavy demands that are put on them by employing associations. I do not suggest that it should be a matter of indulgence. Teachers should know clearly hours for reporting for duty, should know what is expected of them in regard to attending meetings, should know about the length of the year and the length of the week, and it should be expected that they carry out their duties to the associations. On the personal side there could sometimes be wiser and kinder handling and less personal criticism.

Kindergarten Service itself: "We who are so close to the work done can take for granted the value and quality of the work. We in New Zealand can hold our heads very high indeed in the field of pre-school education. Accommodation standards, standards of equipment, standards of maintenance and standards of administration of our kindergartens are something of which we can be justly proud. We must set our sights high to maintain these standards and keep running well. All honour to the Committees who carry out their obligations to their own kindergartens so well. The programmes offered are in keeping with the best in education and psychology and psychiatry. We can proudly take any visitor from overseas to see the programme that is running.

"There is everything to be said for the practice of inviting parents and children into the kindergarten before enrolment. Pre-entry groups are arranged to establish a working relationship before enrolment. I believe it to be a very successful way of helping the child to adjust to the new environment. There is so much to be said for the mother-helper arrangements to be found in so many kindergartens. Mothers should be encouraged to come into the kindergarten and make whatever contributions they can. The very special knowledge of the mother, added to the professional knowledge, means that both can do together what either does less well alone. We can accept this as a fact because it is backed by world opinion. Parents, and the mother in particular, are the greatest influence and greatest factor in the child's healthy growth and development and we must admit the mother and child together. Whatever we do for the child alone we do less well than we do for the two together.

"Training is a subject that has worried conference and training associations for some time now. I believe that this question of the quality of the recruit matters more than anything else. While you are pleased to hear of the increase in the number of students, you must remember that during training a number of studentships are terminated. This wants watching. The fact that a studentship has to be terminated may be due to the fact that a girl proves to be unsuitable. It might well be that the girl finds the work different from what she imagined it. It is good that, if a girl proves unsuitable, her studentship should be terminated as soon as possible. Therefore, the fact that some studentships are terminated shows that the position is being watched. Over the last four years the number of studentships terminated were -- 1958, 12; 1959, 6; 1960, 15; 1961, 14; 1962, 11 to the end of July.

Maori Education:

"Some of you will have already seen the policy statement in the Gazette. (Read statement). At this stage a good deal of effort will be concentrated in helping to establish pre-school education.

"There are Maoris living alongside and among pakehas and one would wonder that the Maori child would come for enrolment just as the pakeha does. There are kindergartens in which efforts have been made to encourage Maori parents to enrol their children. I think that perhaps the thing to do might be the deliberate setting out to make the Maori mother feel that she and her child are more welcome. We have to find a way of helping the Maori mother to see the absolute importance of taking the opportunity and making her feel really welcome. Except for that I doubt that the kindergarten movement will have much of a role to play. In a truly Maori district it is extremely unlikely that there would be enough children for a kindergarten. Play Centre, which is a smaller unit, can more readily serve the smaller districts. I can't see that the more inaccessible Maori communities would be able to attract teachers in the numbers necessary. It is foreseen by the Foundation that the main development will be to the Play Centre movement where they are looking for help. We can and should do what we can to see that in kindergartens already established every effort is made to get Maori children in. A recognised Play Centre has been established at Ratana Pa school. There are 3, 4 or 5 recognised in the far north.

Preparation for Opening of New Kindergartens.

"There are some 17 or 18 kindergartens still under construction. Over the last few years it has been possible to offer the services of one of the staff of pre-school services in the Department to help staff to prepare for the opening. This is not a service which you must have, but only something that is offered. Any of you are very welcome to ask for help if wanted. But firstly please let us know in plenty of time and secondly be late rather than early in the opening date. I think the service is appreciated and is worthwhile. But another problem may arise, we might have to find some way of staggering the dates. It might be a case of first come, first served. Deferring the date might mean an extra week's salary and you would have to decide whether the service was worth it.

"I want to talk about the word "free" and to make some brief comment about it. One association overcame this difficulty in a good way. A notice in its kindergarten said something like this -- "This kindergarten is free in the sense that the primary school is free, no fee may be charged. The Council has to raise a considerable sum to keep the kindergarten going and looks to the parents of the children for whom it provides to help in raising this money. A system of voluntary contributions will reduce the amount of work for everybody."

Miss Gallagher concluded her remarks by reading an essay written by a kindergarten teacher on her experiences in handling handicapped children. Miss Gallagher used them as an illustration, not of what kindergartens have to offer to the handicapped child, but of the quality and sincerity of the kindergarten teacher in her understanding of the needs of young children. Miss Gallagher has made this essay available to the Union and it is intended to include it in the next Newsletter.