

NEW ZEALAND FREE KINDERGARTEN UNION.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT, MRS. A. KEITH HADFIELD, ON HER VISIT TO SOUTH ISLAND KINDERGARTENS.

It has been my privilege to visit, on my way South, Kindergartens at Ashburton, Temuka, Timaru, Invercargill and on my way home Geraldine. I also visited the new Training College Building at Dunedin and met the Executive. In all these I found the same spirit of service, the same enthusiasm and the same determination to extend the work.

ASHBURTON hopes soon, with valuable local assistance, to become the owner of the building at Allenton, a very bright room, good section of land with ample room for extension. The Committee would like to raise the grade to Grade II.

ASHBURTON EAST Kindergarten is carried on in a hall but efforts are being made to build on a splendid section purchased by this Kindergarten Committee.

I found the members of these two Committees very earnest and enthusiastic.

TEMUKA is carried on in a Church Hall which is of sufficient size. Mrs. Corbett, the President, has an excellent grip of the work and is very keen.

TIMARU. Mrs. Hanan kindly drove me round to the three Kindergartens. West-end and Ranui are attractive Kindergartens, the first building is situated in a small Park. The large room itself is dark but opens on to a large porch with sliding windows which certainly redeems it. The children with the staff were having organised games in the beautiful grounds when we arrived and a happy group of beautiful children they were.

RANUI Kindergarten. The Timaru Association was indeed fortunate to have had the use of this building offered to them by one of the Anglican Churches. The Church uses it only for Sunday School. It is a new building and an extremely bright room with windows facing towards the sea.

KENSINGTON. I realised on visiting this Kindergarten how urgent was the need for a new building. The Association has purchased a very fine section and are enthusiastically going about the business of raising money for an up-to-date Kindergarten Building.

INVERCARGILL. Mrs. Aldridge, the President, drove me round to their Kindergartens, all four owned by the Association. I was delighted with these and there was ample evidence of attention being given to both grounds and buildings. I also inspected the section the Association contemplates purchasing, on which will be erected the fifth Kindergarten. If the Committee has the push and the enthusiasm of Mrs. Aldridge I can see the fifth Kindergarten, and even the sixth, soon materialising.

GERALDINE had just opened their Kindergarten in quite an attractive building in a good area of land, owned by the Salvation Army, the Hall being used for no other purpose. I was pleased to hear this Committee is now negotiating for a section in a suitable locality.

DUNEDIN. Mrs. Smeaton drove me to the house property which the Government purchased for the Dunedin Kindergarten Training College. The Dunedin property will prove a very suitable property for training purposes as there is good accommodation and a splendid section.

Reviewing my visits to the various Centres my impressions are :

1. Every Association complained about staffing, and I feel strongly that our wish to raise the standard of staffs.

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Reviewing my visits to the various Centres my impressions are :

1. Every Association complained about staffing, and I feel strongly that our wish to raise the standard of our Kindergartens in every way will never be realised so long as staffing is at present. Non-trained staff may be excellent with the children but they have

not had the advantage of our Trained Staff. They can have little, or no, idea of Child Development, no instruction in Art and Music in the Kindergarten, no Speech Training, so very essential for a girl in touch with young children. I personally feel strongly (and the idea was brought forward by Dunedin at our last Executive Meeting) that we should withhold permission for further Associations to start until such time as the staffing problem is solved. These districts could, in the meantime, open a Nursery Play Centre; furthermore our Union should emphasise the necessity of these districts sending suitable girls to Training Centres who would, on gaining their Diplomas, return to their own district.

2. An effort should be made by every Association to buy a site and build its own Kindergarten. Rented Halls, however good, are rarely suitable for the perfect Kindergarten and also there is a certain pride in being the owner of an up-to-date Kindergarten building.
3. There is need for a Plan of a Grade I Kindergarten for 40 children, to be of the simplest design yet of approved size and of course to be acceptable to the Education Department. I am in touch at present with our Hon Architect in Christchurch and he will, as soon as he can, look into the matter.
4. There is urgent need for Training Centre Staff to visit the smaller Non-training Centres and to take a kindly and helpful interest in them.
5. So many asked for information on various points that I can see the Booklet this Executive is to issue should be sent out as quickly as possible.
6. The way I was received in each Centre confirmed me in my belief that the Union must get in closer touch with the Associations. The smaller Non-training Associations are doing a wonderful job but they have their very real difficulties and we must realise these and by so doing be spurred on to greater efforts in the cause of the Free Kindergarten Associations in our Dominion. With faith, honest work and co-operation much can be achieved.

(Mrs.) M.C.G. Hadfield,

President. N.Z.F.K. Union.

March 1950.

