



KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION

An official
publication of the
New Zealand Free
Kindergarten Union

July 1978



EDITORIAL

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION : 1978

When some future educational historian writes the story of the development of pre-school education in New Zealand, 1978 could well be cited as a critical year if not a turning point. A large number of factors and developments have come together during this year which appear to indicate that an end can be seen to the continuing struggle to provide pre-school education for the great majority of 3 and 4 year olds. Various social and economic factors have resulted in further reductions in both birth rates and the number of births per year. These smaller numbers in the age groups have resulted in a slackening in demand to the extent that an increasing number of areas are reporting that additional pre-school facilities of the type that has come to be regarded as normal would be difficult to justify, so that in terms of provision saturation point for these areas has nearly been reached.

This trend has, of course, been further helped by the greatly accelerated provision of pre-school facilities. For example, it appears that the number of new kindergartens being completed and opening their doors to children this year is likely to be a record. While the siting of these new kindergartens means that additional children will receive pre-school education who would not otherwise have received any at all, it also means that for many more children the period spent in kindergarten is greatly increased. The resultant admission of younger children to many kindergartens has meant that these kindergartens have changed their character and provided new challenges to teachers who have become accustomed to working with children at a more mature developmental stage.

Pre-school centres in vacant classrooms, mobile pre-school units, community pre-school workers, more advisers, increased correspondence school provision and increased grants are just some of the other provisions which help to confirm the impression that pre-school education in general and kindergarten education in particular are on the march. Reports from working parties and various committees reinforce the feeling of ferment and progress. To be appointed at such a time to a key position in the partnership that exists between the voluntary organisations and the Government in the provision and administration of early childhood education is both challenging and stimulating. Much that is worthwhile has been done in the past. Much is being done. I look forward to working with the kindergarten movement and with the other pre-school movements in achieving even more in the years ahead.

N. G. Leckie,
Director Early Childhood Education.

The New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union

is a body which consists of and co-ordinates kindergarten associations throughout New Zealand working in the interests of kindergarten.

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Articles in this and other journals are the work, thoughts and ideas of individuals and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union.

The winning entry in the "Proverb" competition. Congratulations to Mrs Bronwyn King of Te Aroha.

FOR WANT OF A NAIL

I have always thought that proverbs are illogical. Take, for instance, the other day, when I met Great Aunt Mildred while shopping. She asked how I had got on with a recent job interview in a near-by town. I explained how, unfortunately, I had run out of petrol, four miles from my destination. By the time I had diagnosed the trouble (having a limited knowledge of car functionings, this took quite some time) and flagged a ride into town, I confronted a very irate would-be employer. Needless to say, I failed to get the job.

Great Aunt Mildred shook her head sadly and muttered, "For want of an ale."

"Yes," I agreed emphatically, "I certainly needed a good stiff drink, after that!"

Too late, I realised that Great Aunt Mildred was

a strict teetotaler.

She glared at me menacingly and just managed to get out, "I said, 'For want of a NAIL!' " before she stalked off.

My mind boggled. Maybe Great Aunt Mildred was more eccentric than I realised. How on earth could a nail have been of any help? I have heard of people pouring whisky into petrol tanks as a last resort, but nails—that was going too far! Perhaps she envisaged me nailing holes in someone's tank and furtively draining off the petrol. I am still trying to figure it out.

Great Aunt Mildred has not spoken to me since then, and I hear my name is no longer mentioned in her will.

So much for proverbs!

Items of Interest

"Monitor"

A public meeting attended by 140 people in Dunedin on 8 March 1978 carried the following recommendation unanimously:

- * That TV One and South Pacific appoint a Head of Children's Programmes.
- * That violence on TV be reduced between the hours of 2.00 and 8.00 p.m.
- * That both channels and radio be required to set aside part of their budget to make children's programmes (10 percent was recommended, on the lines of the BBC).
- * That the same standards applied to adult continuity announcers apply to children's announcers (e.g. diction, pronunciation).
- * That "Monitor" shows recognition of quality programmes by making awards of its own.

Since that initial meeting "Monitor" has had some effect as quoted from their first quarterly newsletter:

"Already 'Monitor' has had some effect: the Television Producers' and Directors' Association issued a public statement giving 'Monitor' its support; Television One changed the time of 'Play School' so that it is no longer screened between two soap operas; and Andy's presentation improved almost overnight. Both Andy and Stu, appearing on 'Good Day', confessed they were fed up with being treated as 'links' or 'slots' and admitted that they wanted to do more for children but were given very little opportunity to do so.

"But the most notable effect of 'Monitor's' formation was the achievement of one of our major aims, the appointment of an Executive Producer of Children's Programmes. Within eight days of the public meeting, South Pacific announced the appointment of Mr Bryan Easte, and three days later Television One that of Mr Huntly Elliott. While of course 'Monitor' welcomes these appointments, we will have to make sure that these mean something and are not merely window dressing."

For the many concerned members of the public who have been vocal, but not effective in bringing about an upgrading of children's television the birth of "Monitor" is well overdue.

By becoming a member of "Monitor" you will be able to assist the work of the committee and at the same time receive material for your own

organization's information and use.

You can become an individual member for 1978 by paying \$2.00—or a corporate member for \$5.00.

Write to: Monitor Inc.,
P.O. Box 1061,
DUNEDIN.

COMMENTS from some of the participants in the N.Z./O.E.C.D. Conference

Ann Turner, President of the N.Z. Federation of Parents Centres, queries the value of such a large and expensive conference. Ann feels that not enough notice is taken of the users' views. This gives her a feeling of disillusionment. Until the follow up conference and the working party's recommendations are made known Ann reserves her decision as to the overall value of the conference.

The UNION representatives felt that the conference as a discussion ground was valuable but both wonder what the end result will be. While the representatives of voluntary organizations were frequently asked to "climb out of their boxes" it wasn't obvious that the Departmental representatives were doing his very thing.

Both **Mesdames Lockhart and Muir** agreed that Dr David Geddis's paper on the non-accidental injury to children was the outstanding contribution. It highlighted the fact that none of us can remain "in our boxes" whilst the lives of children and their distraught parents are in danger.

Mrs Pat Ridding the Crippled Children Society Pre-School Adviser found the Conference too long and too intensive. She felt that a great deal of the value was in the informal chat between the participants. Majory Renwick's paper on "Starting School" was a highlight for Pat whose work often shows the vast gap which still exists between pre-school and school especially for handicapped children. Pat felt that discussions were based very much on the normal child with little emphasis on the physically handicapped.

Pat says she finds herself often reflecting on the conference and its value.

Mr Ian Calder of Dr Barnardo's Homes, N.Z., felt the greatest value was in meeting the people engaged in the education field. He found the interchange of ideas between the "care" and "Education" personnel interesting. The vital interest by all present on the question of child-care was a pleasing factor. Ian was disappointed in the end result of the Conference proper, but is looking

forward to the follow up course at Hogben House in July when he is certain further steps towards integration and co-ordination will be taken.

Mr Phil Silva, Executive Director of The Dunedin Multidisciplinary Child Development Study writes:

"I found the O.E.C.D. meeting a very pleasant and worthwhile experience. For me, the greatest value of the week was that of being brought up to date with developments and thinking in pre-school care and education. It was also very useful to meet and renew acquaintanceships with the diverse people concerned about the health, education and welfare of pre-school children. I

was pleasantly surprised to find a high degree of consensus about priorities in the field and the decisions made at the last day of the meeting provided a basis for some preliminary principles that need to be considered by policy planners. The multidisciplinary, multi-departmental and multi-agency flavour of the conference gave support to the notion that we must now consider the whole child and his family when planning for child services. A thoroughly worthwhile week and my thanks to the Director General of Education and his team for their initiative and careful planning and for providing a very pleasant as well as a worthwhile experience."

STORYTELLING

Available soon from National Film Library

16mm. Colour. Length: 37 minutes.

A unique film — The only one on its subject in the World and intended for World wide distribution.
Elizabeth Miller — A noted storyteller and Young Persons Librarian at the Invercargill Public Library discusses the art of Storytelling and demonstrates with a group of pre-schoolers and a group of 8-9 year olds.

Topics Covered.

- Personal Qualities of a Storyteller
- Preparation of a Story Session
- Selection of Stories
- Appropriateness of Stories to different ages and cultures
- Use of props
- Difference between Telling and Reading.

Interviewer: Richard Stephens.

Producer: Michael Milan.

Produced by the Audio Visual Learning Centre, University of Otago, in co-operation with the Department of University Extension, University of Otago.

Co-Ordinator For IYC

Ann Reading is the co-ordinator for the New Zealand National Commission for the International Year of the Child. She started the job on 11 April but will already be known in regions where she has visited and attended meetings in her capacity as co-ordinator.

Many people will also know Ann through her involvement in motor sport administration and from

her past days as a television and radio announcer for the old NZBC.

Ann is not a stranger to administration and co-ordination work. She has just completed a contract with the Education Department as the organiser of the OECD Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education—an international conference held in Palmerston North.

As 1978 progresses Ann will become well known to groups involved in IYC and the community in general as she will be travelling throughout New Zealand co-ordinating activities

and administration for the International Year of the Child.

If you have any information to pass on to the

National Commission or any enquiry about IYC Ann is the person to contact at the N.Z. Commission for I.Y.C., P.O. Box 469, Wellington.

Justice Trevor Olsson in 1974 became Chairman of the Childhood Services Council in South Australia. This council incorporates all childhood services—health, education, welfare, the kindergarten union and other community groups, and functions under the direction of the independent Chairman and the State Government.

Justice Olsson attended the N.Z./O.E.C.D. Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education as a New Zealand Sponsored Consultant.

He has written two papers for Kindergarten Education which give . . .

(1) His view of the Conference

(2) Background information on C.E.R.I.

THE NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES SCENE

When Mrs Lockhart recently invited me to write an article expressing my impressions of the New Zealand scene I must confess that I felt somewhat uneasy. It seemed presumptuous, and even dangerous, for me to do so after a relatively cursory investigation of it whilst visiting your shores for the recent NZ/OECD Conference at Massey University. However, I could not resist the challenge of trying to crystallise out the impact which the various discussions and visits made upon me.

New Zealand has, over the years, had a remarkable and extremely impressive record of social progress and provision of services to those in need of them. Indeed, in various instances it has led the Australasian field by many years. Family protection legislation, the establishment of dental therapy services, the preservation of the best features of a multi-cultural heritage, and an extraordinary involvement of many people in voluntary community service constitute but a few obvious examples.

Against this type of background, it was not surprising to note the very high degree of commitment of the delegates who attended the Massey Conference. They came with extremely diverse backgrounds and, in total, represented virtually all agencies—governmental, academic and community—concerned with the delivery of services for children. They also brought with them a collective wealth of experience and knowledge covering virtually the whole field.

Looking back on the Conference, there are several impressions which stand out above all others.

The first is that there was a complete accord that much still remains to be done to achieve more effective service delivery structures and strategies to provide the best possible range of services for children. More importantly, all delegates came to a better understanding of the fundamental concept that children cannot be dealt with in isolation; and that there is a vital need to develop services which more efficiently support, stimulate and assist the family unit as a whole, thereby creating an ongoing environment which will ensure the best development of children.

I also sensed a growing feeling that New Zealand is at a cross-roads in relation to the manner in which it should approach the provision of early childhood services in the future. This was evidenced by a significant groundswell of interacting factors.

Frequent reference was made to aspects such as perceived conservative (dare I say chauvinistic?) attitudes to women, frustrations caused by a lack of existing governmental policies in the early childhood and family support services, and deficiencies in the effective co-operation between and co-ordination of all of the providing agencies. I was also intrigued by statements made as to perceived ingrained attitudes in the community as to the degree of self-sufficiency generally expected of wives and mothers.

On the other hand, there was a unanimous feeling that, with a high number of women in the work-force, and many parents in need of help and support in bringing up and caring for their children, existing services fell far short, both in

quantity and type, of those which were desirable.

It seemed very clear to me that, at the Conference, much was achieved in promoting a general understanding of the range and types of existing services provided by each agency; and the desirability of developing a more rational, co-ordinated and co-operative approach to forward planning. It was accepted that this would avoid expending effort on unproductive competition for funds and use existing and future resources to better effect.

It seemed clear that, initially, some delegates still had mental reservations that co-operation and co-ordination could prejudice their particular sectional interests. However, by the end of the Conference, much of this atmosphere had been dispelled. The large area of consensus finally achieved was in strong accord with the national New Zealand culture.

For the first time all agencies associated with the education, community welfare, and health areas have adopted a statement of principles which will inevitably have a profound effect on future development of services.

It would, of course, be foolish to believe that major change will occur overnight. The development of full trust and mutually acceptable planning and working relationships will take time; as

will the development of official government policies.

As I see it, the vital feature will be for those who attended the Conference to nurture the atmosphere generated at the Conference and to catalyse a general spread of it at all levels. By imaginative co-operation it should prove possible fairly rapidly to develop a number of projects involving co-ordinated services—particularly directed towards the family unit as a whole—which will serve as outstanding examples to all of what can be achieved by joint approach.

The present environment seems highly susceptible to such an approach and it fits in quite neatly with some pilot projects currently being developed.

I detect a present wave of enthusiasm and united sense of purpose amongst those whom I met, and I feel that this heralds the commencement of a new exciting stage of national development of an excellent network of early childhood services.

We in Australia certainly wish you well in your endeavours. We will look forward with great interest to the outcome of further discussions by the post-Conference steering committee.

Trevor Olsson.

HAVE YOU ? ? ?

Ordered and received your copy of Early Childhood in New Zealand edited by Brian O'Rourke and John Clough?

This book comprises many of the papers presented at the Early Childhood Convention held in Christchurch 1975.

Content and presentation are excellent. Available from Heinemann Educational Books, P. O. Box 36-064, Auckland 9, at \$11.95 a copy.

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Seen the series of pamphlets on "Ideas for Play at Home" published by the Committee on Information for Parents?

These pamphlets are available through the Department of Health, the District Pre-School Ad-

visers and branches of the Plunket Society.

Each set comprises 16 and each deals with a specific topic, eg sand, music, choosing toys and carpentry.

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Heard of the Pipeline series of booklets compiled and illustrated by the Waikato Playcentre Association Equipment Subcommittee. The booklets are designed to give pre-school groups some practical ideas of using and extending their equipment. Themes covered are painting, carpentry, boxes, storage and display, bamboo and interior playspace.

Booklets are available at 30c each from the above committee—PO Box 5150, Frankton.

THE OECD EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES PROJECT

The recent conference at Massey University provided an excellent medium for publicising the extremely important research work into early childhood services being done by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), a group set up by the International Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

That project has not hitherto widely been discussed and is generally little known throughout Australasia, except at governmental level.

In essence, CERI was commissioned in 1974 to embark upon a two-pronged investigation into early childhood services policies within member countries of OECD, of which New Zealand is one. One aspect was to conduct an analysis of common issues involved in an expansion of early childhood care and education services within member countries. The other was to identify common problems and promote ideas on the solution of them. The Massey Conference was designed to constitute one element in the study, with particular reference to the New Zealand scene.

The interesting feature of early investigations was that, in almost every country considered, the approach to early childhood services was fairly fragmented—with administration committed to several non-co-ordinated authorities. It was seen that governmental policies depended very much on both local economic issues and also evolving social perceptions associated with factors such as rising employment rates for women, falling birth-rates, and an increasing awareness as to the needs of young children and the family as a whole.

During my recent visit to CERI at its Paris headquarters, I was privileged to receive copies of some fascinating papers already produced. These contain detailed analyses of the above aspects and point up the dichotomy which commonly exists in most member countries. On the one hand there are serious constraints on the total funds which can, in the present economic situation, reasonably be provided for childhood services. On the other there is a steadily increasing awareness of the *value* of quality caring, health and educative services and a very real developing need for them by many families—particular (but not exclusively) those living in depressed areas or

where the mother must, of necessity, work.

The CERI researches are very much in accord with the paper recently presented by Professor Clarke of Hull University. This strongly emphasises, amongst other things, the importance of providing support and a balanced range of services to families, and not merely to children in isolation; i.e. that the establishment of a good ongoing family environment as well as proper stimulation and developmental experiences for the child itself is a key factor.

It is a very definite conclusion in the study that the following broad considerations are extremely important for the future—

- (1) Quality caring and educative services both contain considerable areas of overlap, and it is a bad mistake to treat them as being totally different and separate. Each should involve stimulative and developmental elements, each should aim to identify a child's needs, and each should be so structured as to facilitate a team approach to meeting those needs.
- (2) It is essential that health, education and caring services be provided for children of *all* ages from birth to school going age. They should not largely be aimed at the three and four year olds as has tended to be the situation in the past.
- (3) If services are to be effective, parents and the local community at large ought to be directly involved in the choice, planning, staffing, and operation of services.
- (4) Very variable situations within communities as to living conditions, family structures, and participation by women in employment demand quite varied and flexible health, care, and education services.
- (5) A key requirement for effective services is the inclusion of supportive and educative elements for parents to ensure that higher standards of "parenting" can be achieved. If this is not possible, the benefits of other services for children are unlikely to be sustained on a long term basis.

The study also threw up a number of other important aspects which it is not feasible here to discuss.

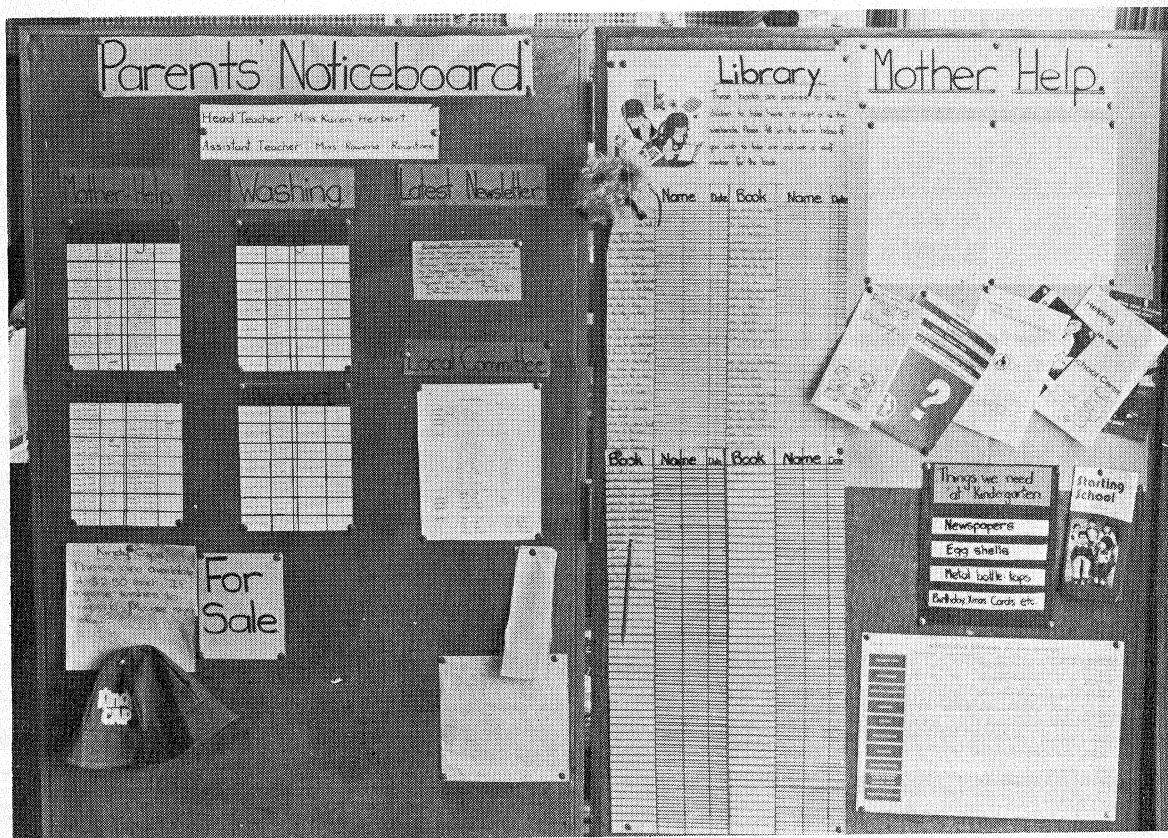
CERI investigations tend to reveal at this stage

Equally, it is quite clear that researches to date have time and time again reinforced the view that we must all rethink traditional approaches to the type and mode of services provided. As a recent CERI report expresses it: "We have however noted a surprisingly related recognition, across international differences, that there should be a fundamentally complementary relationship between care and education . . . The living link in that complementary relationship is the parents . . . So far as economy and efficiency are concerned, this principle is consistent with the concept of fully integrated planning and provision of all the public services supportive of young children *and their parents* . . ."

It certainly does indicate a need to develop a *range* of health, caring and educative services which, in total, will reasonably meet the needs of children of *all* ages from birth onwards and their families. It also points up the requirement that they readily be available on a local, decentralised, basis with a minimum of hassle.

How this is best to be done and co-ordinated will obviously be New Zealand's challenge for the immediate future. The development of decentralised widely representative committees able and prepared to speak on a unified interest basis would appear to provide an important commencement point.

Trevor Olsson.



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DAVID WILLIAM BARNEY—A PROFILE

by W. N. Payne

David William Barney, New Zealander, Associate-professor of Education, married—three children, born —, educated Timaru. Diploma of teaching Dunedin, postgraduate studies London University, served in the Air Force during the second World War. These are the "vital statistics" one would expect to find in a curriculum vitae or a biography.

Looking deeper into the statistics we find a fascinating story. In 1941 having received his Diploma of Teaching he became an Art and Crafts Specialist Teacher at Dunedin North Intermediate School.

At this point the War intervened and he saw service in the U.K., Africa and the Middle East with the R.N.Z.A.F. rising to the rank of Squadron Leader. During 1945 he moved from the position of Officer-in-Charge at the Navigation School in Cairo to become the Staff Psychologist at the R.A.F. Vocational Advice Unit in Northern Ireland.

After a period as Staff Psychologist at the National Institute of Industrial Psychology in London he returned to New Zealand in 1949 and took up teaching again, this time at the Hutt Valley Intermediate School where he was responsible for a class for Backward Children.

Later in the same year he became an Assistant Psychologist for the Department of Education in Wellington. In 1951 he took time out from this position to undertake Ph.D. studies at the University of London.

Back in New Zealand again he continued with the Psychological Service and during several years as a Senior Psychologist he established the first Psychological Service Clinic in the Auckland Area and was also involved with Psychological Services at both Hamilton and Whangarei.

But what of the man behind the statistics? Short in stature, but very big in heart. Undoubtedly his whole character has been influenced by his varied experiences. He is a man with piercingly blue eyes that despite the need for spectacles I suspect see much more than most of us. A good humoured man with a delightful sense of fun and a quick wit. Very much a family man he is equally at ease with learned academics,

students of all ages and from many backgrounds, people of different races and cultures, people of different generations. And in their turn they are able to relate and communicate with him from the professor of psychology to the typist, departmental officers, pre-school officers, kindergarten teachers to parents and children.

Here we have a man of many interests who can quite happily correlate and analyse statistical data; put his hand to carpentry; enjoy the noise and chatter of social gatherings—some of his interests must also be reflected in his family's interest which range from music to canoeing. He is able to commune with nature in the quiet and secluded corners of the country for he has a deep and abiding love of his country. But he also gets a great deal of pleasure from sightseeing in the many countries he has had an opportunity of visiting.

But his greatest love of all his varied interests would be children, and in particular pre-school children. This interest has opened many doors to him both within New Zealand and overseas and through the avenues these doors have led to, he has gained friends all over the world. And naturally with this interaction with others of a similar interest he has gained knowledge of other places and conditions which he unsparingly shares with all New Zealanders working in the pre-school movements.

Though he doesn't confine his interest solely to the kindergarten movement he has given a great deal of his time to that movement. He has been a parent, a committee member, an association member, a lecturer at the Training College, and is presently a member of the Education Committee of the Auckland Association.

As well as the hundreds of students who have listened to his "words of wisdom" at the College, countless numbers of teachers have enjoyed the repartee of discussion groups and workshops that have been held throughout the length and breadth of the country. A comment from one who has attended many of these was "The teachers love Dr Barney. They feel he knows their problems and understands them."

Teachers and would-be teachers, if they have listened well, would be well versed in a wide range of children, their abilities and disabilities. They don't merely hear about average little Johnny Jones down the road whose mother has had a reasonable education and whose Dad has a white collar job. Dr Barney is able to pass on to others information on and advice about the creative, the gifted, the handicapped (including all the varied range that society has attempted to hang labels on), and of course, normal little Johnny Jones as well.

Over the years many surveys have been carried out by Dr Barney himself or by students under his direction. These have given further insight into the New Zealand pre-schooler rather than relying on overseas studies as reported in the literature. There has been A Survey of Atypical Pre-school Children, Patterns of Arriving and Leaving Pre-school, Kindergarten Four-year-olds Concept of Reading Knowledge and Books and of Printing, Use of the Kindergarten Activities, Block Play Survey, Pre-School Activity, Who uses the Book Corner, Pre-school Children With Special Educational Needs, Pre-school Children's Concept of Reading, Noise in Kindergartens, Handicapped Children in Kindergartens and Playcentres, Availability of Pre-school Education and the Sesame Street Survey.

Other surveys have been conducted on variations of staff. For instance the Auckland and Christchurch style kindergarten head teacher resulting in Auckland/Christchurch staff contrasts; The Kindergarten Assistant Teacher Auckland Style, Staff Survey Dunedin Kindergartens, Bay of Plenty Style Head Teacher, Profile of Manawatu Staff and following from these the Auckland/Christchurch/Bay of Plenty/Manawatu Staff Contrasts. Further surveys could make interesting reading particularly to see if there have been many changes in the pattern. And of course there was the Status of Kindergarten Teachers—which only pointed up a world wide trend recently emphasised by Dr Katz at the Melbourne APA conference that kindergarten teachers have low status in many people's eyes.

There have been surveys about parents—Survey of Parental Occupations and Parental Attitude

to the Sex Role of Pre-schoolers.

The information gained has been passed on to associations and staff alike.

One of Dr Barney's major attributes is his ability to write as he speaks. It is this ability that makes quite statistical information easy to read e.g. his book "Who Gets to Pre-school". He also has a knack of keeping to the point when speaking. No matter how much he may appear to digress he always returns to the point from where he left the beaten track.

But he has not only lectured to and written up information for the people within the profession. Because he is big in heart and has an ability to relate to people at all levels he has also spent a good deal of time observing, assisting and advising on individual children with specific problems. He has also given many, many annual meeting guest speaker addresses—always a delight to hear. Through these talks parents and interested lay people have been encouraged to give of their time to the work of the kindergarten movement. In some cases he has shocked us into it viz. the evening at Waiuku when he began (just as a deep silence settled and we all sat with bated breath) by thumping the table with a resounding bang and commenced with the words "Now you didn't expect that!" which set the seal for the theme of the whole talk that many things in life are unexpected and it was just the same in kindergarten work and we shouldn't expect things to always be the same.

It is because of these things that I believe David Barney has done more for the kindergarten movement in New Zealand than any other man. Truly outstanding service indeed.

Now you may say that I have painted a very rosy picture with no faults at all. I dare say he has faults (we all do) but most of the complaints one hears boil down to reasons which could be covered by the old cliché "a personality clash". But whatever his faults I count it a privilege to have known him, and thank him sincerely for the conviction he engendered in me when I first hear him speak at the Kindergarten Training College in Arney Road many years ago, that there was something really worthwhile giving my time and talents to.

CAN WE MEET THE CHALLENGE

I was recently fortunate to be invited to attend a regional inservice course at Hogben House, Christchurch, entitled, "The Community and Early Childhood Education". Course members came from all areas of the pre-school and primary education system throughout the South Island.

During the course I came to realise that it is not "where we are going" that is of concern, but rather "what are our aims?"

I say this because I have become aware that a tremendous growth is taking place in pre-school services. Play groups, toddlers' sessions and day care centres, to name but a few, are all being established to cater for the needs of today's children and more especially today's communities.

Pre-school education is already going somewhere—what the Union needs to do is re-think its aims so that we are in accord with the direction of growth of our services.

We should be proud of the achievements of the kindergarten movement. We have 455 kindergartens in operation which bears witness to the dedication of so many to the aims of the movement. If however the same dedication is to continue there must be a re-appraisal of these aims.

Do we need to change them, or merely adapt the ones we have? I have no answer to this, but I hope some of the following examples will cause you to do some re-thinking, that you try to see what alternatives we could use, and to see if the present system is able to meet the needs of the movement in the future.

One point that kept recurring at the Hogben House course was the need for community involvement. During the course we were taken to see two new kindergartens in a new housing development in Christchurch.

The community officer of the local council spoke to us and outlined how this urban development had taken place. He stressed the problems associated with this, especially that of providing the "services" when they were needed, not after the community had become a reality. He then praised the pre-school movements for having planned and established two kindergartens and a playcentre.

When I visited the kindergartens I was disturbed to see elements of change that were working

against the principles outlined by the community officer.

We first visited the local school where we were told about community involvement, the extra bay on the library that the county had set up for the community, and the obvious sense of anticipation they had with the opening of the new kindergarten on their school grounds. I wondered why the kindergarten could not have been opened when the school was.

Course members were told the kindergarten was built to the "Nelson plan", and kindergarten design was now undertaken by Educations Boards. A nice building, but . . . all open plan, no separate teachers office, no enclosed storeroom, a lovely kitchen area in the body of the kindergarten, but alas, the bench was covered with linoleum.

When I questioned the association member accompanying us on such things as how does the teacher interview a concerned parent, or will the lino-covered bench stand up to the heavy wear that it will receive? she told me that, "this was a 'Nelson plan' and features had to be accepted."

If our aim therefore, is to provide a kindergarten for a community should we not also be involved with its planning? More importantly, should the local community for whom it is being built not be involved from the beginning?

To emphasise the point I am making, consider the following: I once spoke with a woman who was on the establishment committee for the kindergarten my children attended. During the conversation I came to realise how much that building meant to her, especially when she spoke of the times at the end of the month when accounts totalled more than funds. The committee would then hold a cake stall to meet the deficit. Other experiences she recalled all pointed to the deep-seated pride she had in "our kindergarten".

Another change that is becoming more obvious is the widening control the movement is coming under from the Department of Education and the Education Boards.

Take for example the benefits we have gained with the acceptance of sessional grants. Certainly we have less money worries than before, but the acceptance has naturally brought with it new conditions and ways in which we have to operate. The question I ask is "have we been adaptive

enough to cope with this new situation?"

Do we have a member elected to Education Boards? Should we? Does your Association have an effective system for getting its maintenance done? What happens when the board's maintenance officer turns up?

This brings me to my final point. We have set up an organisation that was able to cope with the needs in the past. But I wonder if these will be effective for the future and more especially will they be able to ensure the aims of the movement are met.

I know I am treading on sacred ground in suggesting this because I am always told it is the Association or Council which does all the paper work, staff control, organising etc. But in relation to the changing situations I wonder if this control does not detract from the full community involvement I think should be one of our aims.

Is this the best way to meet the needs of the community?

I have asked many questions and given no answers. This was done deliberately to stimulate your thinking, and like Mrs Muir, who produced that magnificent report I hope you will be able to stand outside the organisation and consider the points raised.

I conclude by referring again to the Hogben House course where I saw and heard of so many wonderful things happening in the pre-school movement. The community workers, the play groups, the mobile kindergartens, the pre-school operating within a school where sharing was so obvious. With all these and the other changes we heard about I realised it was the people, not the organisation who formed the crux of pre-school education.

Where we are going is an important question, but equally so is, "how can we involve more people?"

Bryan Bishop.

Marie Bell, Education Officer, Teacher Education, Department of Education, Head Office was the recipient of British Council Study Grant in 1977. During her tour she visited many pre-school centres in the United Kingdom. In this article Mrs Bell writes about training and staffing in these centres.

Pre-school education is still a highly exciting and controversial area. As in New Zealand it is mainly staffed by women, but the training which allows teachers to work in the primary school and gain positions of status and responsibility as heads of nursery and junior schools gives more scope for female promotion than in our system. Heads of junior and nursery schools always appeared to have time to talk to visitors, and peaceful offices in which to do this. A New Zealand teacher I met working in a London Nursery school missed the parent contact as the Head teacher handled it all. But she did appreciate the high staffing ratio which allowed her to work with individuals and small groups in depth, and the lack of interruption from parents and community during sessions with the children.

Pressure to prepare children for school by beginning direct teaching of the 3R's was evident. In some areas where empty classrooms have become available children are admitted to school soon after their fourth birthday and often taught by teachers who have had no pre-school training. In some areas, at least, parents thought their children were gaining an advantage.

Leaders in the pre-school world expressed fears about the dilution of principles and the

lowering of standards in the education of young children by the amalgamation of the pre-school training colleges into polytechnics or colleges of further education. There is certainly great variety in the training of pre-school teachers.

I was interested in in-service training programmes in Edinburgh where junior school teachers with no pre-school experience were enabled to attend in depth courses at Moray House to make themselves eligible to head the large Nursery school cum Day Nursery establishments being set up in their areas. As the staffs numbered up to 15 and the parents and community workers from Health and Social Security were involved, staff management was a subject requiring expertise, particularly in human relations. One of the greatest problems was the difference in conditions of service between nursery nurses and teachers. Tension peaked after the long summer holidays when the teachers returned after the nurses had been in charge. There are often management problems because of the difficulty of achieving parity of status between deputy Head Teacher and matrons.

A factor which always impresses in the United Kingdom is the variety. This acceptance of diversity is reflected in pre-school education. Head

teachers may have trained as Nursery teachers or Nursery nurses. Allowances for headships differ and do not necessarily relate to the size of centres. Nursery nurses are paid according to the National Joint Council scale. All teachers are employed by local education authorities and some are paid Social Priority Area allowances. Nursery staff may be employed by the Local Education Authority alone, by the authority and Social Services department or solely by the Social Services Department.

In some nursery schools teachers work only the normal school hours. In others a shift system operates to cover the whole day. Staff holidays vary to cover the year. Holidays may vary from 34-60 days per year. Nursery Nurses may work a

47 week year or extended hours during a 40 week year.

The recruitment of qualified nursery nurses has been a serious problem. There has been a high turnover and much absence caused by the location of centres, transport difficulties and the long working day and year. Staff illness reaches a high level, respiratory complaints being particularly common. This may reflect the age of staff and their close contacts with children and conditions of service. Another factor may be the special physical and emotional strain of working with so many deprived children.

The strains and complexity of this work do not appear to be fully understood yet by those who are responsible for conditions of service.

In recent years there has been a great deal written about "Gifted Children". Five kindergarten teachers in Christchurch undertook to prepare this paper for Professor Clem Hill of Massey University.

What Kindergarten Teachers Could Do For Gifted Children

1. There appears to be a healthy consensus of opinion that:

Gifted Children are important, and they need to be recognised, and the Education System should take positive political, administrative and public steps to do something for the gifted in New Zealand.

2. These positive steps should be of a planned long term fashion, with the aim to provide facilities and opportunities for:

- The Gifted
- Parents of the Gifted
- Research about the Gifted
- Gifted
- Teacher Training

3. Kindergarten Teachers need

- To have special training at Teachers College in the field of Special Needs, i.e. the gifted, slow learners, handicapped disadvantaged children etc.
- A three-year course is needed, not only for the Teachers benefit, but also in comparison with overseas college programmes.
- Teachers need the co-operation of Parents, Kindergarten Associates, Teachers Colleges, Department of Education.

4. Kindergarten Teachers

- Need to know how to identify a gifted child. Testing for giftedness is not the whole answer.

Teachers must know by observation.

- Need to recognise that their role as a teacher is vital to the future use or misuse of our gifted children.
- Need to understand gifted children and help them, but not feel threatened by them.
- Need to create special programmes to accommodate their gifted children, but should not overdo it to the extent that the less gifted suffer.
- Need to know how to utilise and encourage Parental help and involvement.
- Should have more in-service courses specifically related to special needs in Early Childhood Education.

5. Practical Suggestions

- A. Identification/Observation of Gifted Children
Gifted children usually have:

- a. A boundless enthusiasm for new experiences and a great ability to adjust to them.
- b. A presence of high observational powers plus a desire to retain information discovered.
- c. Early language development, large vocabulary which is accurately employed and used.
- d. A special interest in, and awareness of the environment and people.
- e. High levels of intelligence, creative ability, curiosity, attainment.

- f. A long attention span and strong powers of concentration.
- g. Initiative and an ability to lead, and make decisions.

B. Programmes Aimed at:

- a. Intellectual challenge (quality not quantity) e.g. second language.
- b. Developing self-direction and independence.
- c. Encouraging originality and imagination.
- d. Common sense, discipline and control.
- e. Providing skills and expertise as well as intellectual challenge. Thus a balanced programme.

C. Teacher Training

- Three year course.
- Special needs specialisation.
- More practically qualified college staff are needed.
- In-service courses.
- More contact with real-life situations problems

D. Parental Involvement

- *Parents need to know what a gifted child is. What needs to be done. What they can do.
- *Parents must be able to help teachers and vice versa.
- *Parents should make a realistic understanding of their child's potential for the sake of all concerned.
- *Parents need to encourage their children at

home, and put themselves out for their children's sake.

E. Role of the Teacher

Responsibilities

- *Maintain the child's interest in learning
- *Provide a planned richly rewarding programme
- *Be a Guide, Advisor, Planner, discussion mate/friend, Resource collector, Counsellor, Observer, Supporter, diplomat (with Parents, Department)
- *Recognise that their role and responsibilities are dynamic
- *Promote parental discussion and involvement.

F. Use of Resources

- *Use parents for knowledge, experience, interest, contacts
- *Use Universities, Teachers Colleges for theoretical know-how, contacts, opinion, research
- *Use literature to provide information
- *Use the gifted children, they can help
- *Don't expect someone else to help you, but always ask.

Remember that the gifted of today may well be our leaders of tomorrow. We all have a responsibility for our future generations.

(This material has been sent forward by Professor Hill, Massey University).

NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR IYC OUTLINE PLANS FOR IYC 1979

THREE STAGES:

- 1978 - Study and Preparation
- 1979 - Activities, Publicity, Fund-raising
- 1980 - Continuing programme, legislation

In 1979 each month has been designated by a 'Theme of the Month'. The themes for study and their corresponding months are:

January	— The Child in Play and Creativity
February	— The Child in Care
March	— The Child and Family/Preparing for Parenthood
April	— The Child and Health
May	— The Child—Work and Vocation
June	— The Child and Learning
July	— The Child and the Media
August	— The Child in a Multi-Cultural Society
September	— The Child at Risk
October	— The Child in the World
November	— The Law and the Rights of the Child
December	— A Child's View

Nga Tamariki Kindergarten

As a newly formed committee we are extremely upset with the amount of vandalism being committed in our Kindergarten grounds.

After the Kindergarten opened at the beginning of November 1977 we had a few rather hectic weeks trying to get the grounds in reasonable order. We then had the Christmas break of seven weeks in which we were victims of vandalism—bottles were smashed on the Kindergarten roof, the sandpit was strewn with glass and rubbish thrown around the grounds.

No one appears to have seen any of this happening but we believe this to be the work of teenagers.

The sandpit had to be virtually emptied and this we are rather reluctant to refill for fear of it being filled with broken glass again. Although regulation covers were made for the sandpit, these are often lifted off and if not replaced by protective committee members, not only glass

makes its way to the sand but animals contaminate it also.

Our teachers are continually picking up glass when outside with the children, so no child is allowed to go bare footed for fear of a nasty accident.

We have approached responsible neighbours but many of these people would rather have nothing to do with the problems for fear of reprisal on their own property.

Have any other committees any ideas as to how to overcome vandalism?

It also appears that the Trespassers sign has no effect on people entering the grounds and that these do not mean terribly much anyway.

We do hope your committee don't have to continually battle against problems like these, but through your suggestions we may be able to overcome ours—especially glass in the sandpit.

Valerie Pretious.

Colour Recognition in 4-Year-Old Kindergarten Children—A Pilot Study

Findings of 372 children in the Manawatu area showed that over 80 percent of these children could recognise the colours—blue, green, yellow, orange, red, black, brown and white.

In this pilot study students from the Palmerston North Teachers College kindergarten unit tested for colour recognition in children while they were on section in kindergartens. No standard testing procedure was used, students were simply required to ascertain whether a child knew or could name the colour. Testing was done informally, the intention being that students develop the art of finding out through questioning and observing whether children had attained colour concepts.

The results obtained showed that a very large proportion of the tested children attending morning kindergarten could recognise the colours and name them.

The results of the survey are intriguing. The figures were higher for black and white than for the primary colours. Red was unexpectedly high but orange and yellow were unexpectedly below a colour like brown. It is proposed that the investigation be repeated using standardised colour materials and testing procedures.

(Mrs) Pat Jenkins,
Lecturer,

Early Childhood Education,
Palmerston North Teachers College.

Colour	No. of children naming colour	Total no. of children tested	Percentage
Black	337	372	90
White	334	372	89.7
Red	333	372	89.5
Blue	324	372	87.1
Brown	323	372	86.8
Green	320	372	86
Orange	311	372	83.6
Yellow	308	372	82.8

CHOOSING BOOKS FOR GIFTS

The following suggestions may help to look critically at a book of fiction, when we have limited time to make a choice.

Title: Does it whet your curiosity or leave you cold? How and why?

Cover: Does the picture on the dust jacket make you want to look inside the book? How does it achieve this?

Blurb: (Inside front dust jacket) for 3-4 sentences of enthusiastic synopsis. The back of the dust jacket may give more titles, biographical details about the author.

Chapter Headings: Not all books today use these. If they do, what is the purpose? What do you learn from them?

Illustrations: As you riffle through the pages, do any of these catch your eye, make you wonder what they refer to? Does the text opposite have some relevance to the picture? How necessary is the colour?

Format: How well bound is the book? If a hard-

back and therefore expensive, does the book open easily but firmly? Is the paper dull, opaque and strong? Is the margin large, the type adequately spaced? If for an early reader is the print

this size.

Sex: No, just whether it is primarily for a boy or a girl! Is there an age above which this is important?

First Page: ALWAYS read this right through. In most books, and especially children's, this should give you:

1. A clear picture of some important characters
2. An indication of the setting and the mood or theme
3. An inordinate desire to turn over and keep reading.

Acquired with other material on books from the New Zealand Playcentre Federation Conference and published with prior approval.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD (1979)

OBJECTIVES

Adopted by N.Z. National Commission for IYC.

(1) The purpose, as stated internationally by the IYC Secretariat in New York in its first published brochure, namely—

- * encourage all countries, rich and poor, to review their programmes for the promotion of the well-being of children, and to mobilise support for national and local action programmes according to each country's conditions, needs and priorities;
- * heighten awareness of children's special needs among decision-makers and the public;
- * promote recognition of the vital link between programmes for children on the one hand, and economic and social progress on the other;

* spur specific, practical measures—with achievable goals—to benefit children, in both the short and long term on the national level.

- (2) To help raise the awareness of New Zealanders of the needs of New Zealand children in their families.
- (3) To help raise the awareness of New Zealanders of the needs of children in the developing countries and encourage support for national and international organisations concerned with these needs.
- (4) To act as the initiator, catalyst and co-ordinator for all organisations and individuals wishing to contribute to and participate in these aims, including the implementation in its own right of such projects and activities it regards as desirable for their attainment.