"Active association with the opening of seven new kindergartens in the Rotorua area in the past two-and-a-half years has made me very familiar with the heavy responsibility which must be shouldered by the kindergarten council and local committees to ensure that a new kindergarten makes a good start."

Mrs H. Downer, president of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union (Inc), told this to the union's conference yesterday in the Ritz Supper Room, Rotorua.

Mrs Downer said many of the domestic and staff problems should never arise and that if the association knows its functions as the employing body and the staff is familiar with terms of its employment, these problems should be reduced to a minimum.

Kindergarten regulations, in terms of weekly schedules, salary scales, leave-of-absence rules and by-laws should be clearly known and understood.

An early meeting at the beginning of the year will often remove many of the difficulties.

Material goals such as establishing a kindergarten in a permanent building are required from those of any other time except that their need for security is greater in our rapidly-changing world with its ever-present tensions.

The time had come to revise the manner in which the executive is set-up, in line with the progress made in the union, and consideration should be given to a plan for a permanent office for the organisation.

The kindergarten union is the body recognised by the Government as representing all kindergartens and it is in discussions with the Minister of Education.

"The child chooses what he would like to do most. If he wishes to paint, he is free to paint and to paint what he wishes. But all the children learn to share, turns at the work, and to use the correct materials."

Staffing difficulties were gradually being overcome in Rotorua, said Miss Gallagher. A few years ago 40 child kindergartens with only one or two teachers were common. The figures now show 40-child kindergartens have a minimum of two teachers while the few 60-child organisations are now staffed by a minimum of three teachers.

The ruling of 1961 that no new kindergartens could start unless fully staffed was now showing results. The kindergarten organisation was becoming consolidated and instead of establishing kindergartens suffering because of formation of new organisations, they were now on a solid footing and would be able to offer help and experience when permission was granted for the associations to develop new areas.
IN DEVELOPMENT

"The early formative years are the most important in a child’s life and attendance at a kindergarten will give an important social and educational experience to little children," said Mrs H. Downer, Rotorua, when opening the business session of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union conference in Wanganui this week.

“We have come a long way since the first free kindergarten was established 73 years ago.

“We have been able to build on sure foundations carefully laid by devoted workers whose chief concern was to provide for the social, emotional and physical welfare of little children.

“We have developed a pre-service which is the envy of many parts of the world.

“Mrs Downer dealt with two letters dealing with the word ‘free’, the reason why its use is retained, and whether or not the word could be substituted.

“Mrs Downer said that during visits to associations she had been asked to explain the meaning of the word and to say why a specified sum could not be named by kindergarten teachers.

“After explaining the structure of the movement, Mrs Downer said that it was based on that requirement and continued Government assistance depended on strict adherence to that rule.

“If you consult the Concise Oxford Dictionary you will see that a free school is one where no fees are charged and that is what we mean by a free kindergarten. No fees are charged,” she said.

Although 57 teachers had resigned last year the loss was equal to those ready for service. Miss Gallagher said Miss Gallagher said that as far as the quality of the kindergarten work was concerned New Zealand could hold its head high in the world.

She said that more than 15,500 had attended kindergarten in 1961.

A HIGHLIGHT of the conference in Wanganui this week was a cocktail party on Tuesday night. Eight women who attended the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union conference were shown in above photograph (from left): Mrs R. Carnahan, president; Miss M. H. Smith, E. Humphries and M. Nuttall.

Mrs R. Carnahan, president, gave a full and interesting report of the conference held in Christchurch, which she attended as a delegate. The birthday cake, donated by the president, was the feature of the afternoon tea.

Rotorua W.D. BIRTHDAY

Members and friends from all parts of the Bay of Plenty attended the eighth birthday celebration of the Rotorua Central W.D.P.F.

Items were provided by Mesdames H. Smith, E. Humphries and M. Nuttall.