

NEW ZEALAND FREE KINDERGARTEN UNION (INC.)

ANNUAL MEETING - CHRISTCHURCH - AUGUST 1975

REPORT ON KINDERGARTEN TEACHER TRAINING

Towards the end of 1974 the Government decided that all Kindergarten Training Centres should be closed at the end of the year, and in future all kindergarten students would be trained in Primary Teachers Colleges. The Union had been in favour of such a move, but all were concerned with the unnecessary haste and confusion such an announcement created. Staff were naturally concerned about their future, and although additional positions were advertised in the Primary Colleges for Pre-School staff all suffered emotionally from the hurried manner in which our training centres were being closed. Finally the Department of Education set up a special Safeguards Committee to look after the interests of our staff in the Training Centres. The N.Z.F.K.U. was most active in seeing that our staff were fairly treated and it is pleasing to report that all except one were finally placed in positions that were acceptable. This one, who proved selfish and unreasonable, would not finally accept any position and has disappeared from the teaching scene. As a result of this hurried action Primary College staffs did not have adequate time to prepare courses and to obtain suitable materials and text-books for the beginning of the College year in 1975. The Union still cannot understand the need for such urgency to incorporate our students in Primary Colleges.

The Union was then concerned that our students should not suffer from this move. In every college some form of Advisory Committee, on which the Kindergarten Union was represented, was set up to discuss and help plan suitable courses. From reports received it has been evident that all Principals have been keen to see that suitable courses are being developed, but many find that to integrate a two-year course with a primary three-year course presents difficulties. Another problem has been the need to provide adequate observation and experience in kindergartens. All these factors must be watched by our representatives on college sub-committees. The Union is in frequent contact with members of the Department of Education who are concerned with teacher training. It seems that soon the N.Z.F.K.U. will be represented on Teachers College Councils.

The N.Z.F.K.U. has been active in stressing the need for three year training for our kindergarten teachers though not necessarily three years "end-on". This matter has been raised at the National Advisory Council for Pre-School Education. The Government Treasury has stated, at the time of integration, that they had reservations about three year courses, so it was decided that a research be set up to evaluate the two year courses of training for Early Childhood Education. A special committee, on which the Union is represented, has been set up to carry out this research. This is proving a most difficult work. Associations are asked that when approached by members of the Evaluation Committee they should offer every help that is needed, and to assure staff that they personally are not being inspected but the courses that they have had are under examination. It is the Union's hope that weaknesses found in courses may be remedied. As a result of this evaluation, based on skills and attitudes suggested as essential or highly desirable by a good cross section of people concerned in kindergarten work, there could be a sounder approach to future training.

KINDERGARTEN DIPLOMA

The Department of Education has agreed that while the present two-year courses in primary teachers colleges are in operation successful students should receive the N.Z.F.K.U. Diploma as well as any other certificate of attainment that the College may wish to issue. It is understood that all Principals have agreed to present this certificate when holding Graduation Ceremonies. Under present regulations only those who hold this Kindergarten Diploma may be appointed on full salary to a kindergarten teaching positions

THE NEW STANDARD TERTIARY BURSARY

Students who wish to enter College and study for a Kindergarten Diploma after selection will have to decide whether to enter a training college under the new Standard Tertiary Bursary or under the present type of bonded studentship.

The financial differences are great. At the time of writing the amount of the bond has not been announced. However it must be remembered that bonded students are at present guaranteed employment when they satisfactorily complete their course, while those on the New Standard Tertiary Bursary may not be so guaranteed. It is important that all Associations should be aware of the situation so that they may advise prospective candidates.

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K.J.HAYR

ON BEHALF OF THE N.Z.F.K.U.