

TEACHERS AND THE COMMUNITY

Salaries Not the First Consideration

THERE was a time when an education conference meant a gathering of teachers met to discuss grading and salaries. Sometimes it means that still, and no more. But many conferences have been held recently in which the welfare of the teachers has not even been mentioned, and two more will be held this week.

They are being held for the purpose of considering how the school curriculum can be given its fullest social content. At Feilding Agricultural High School in the North Island, and at St. Andrews College, Christchurch, in the South Island, teachers representing every post-primary branch of the whole education service—

"From every kind of post-primary school in the Dominion, Pakeha and Maori. The Maoris are, in fact, fully represented, since there will be a delegate at Feilding from every school in the Dominion offering them post-primary instruction."

"And all these teachers wanted to come? They were quite willing to give up a week of their holidays for the good of the cause?"

"Well, I can't say off-hand what the position is in Christchurch, but I have already had to refuse from 40 to 50 applications for Feilding."

"What about expenses? Will the delegates be out of pocket?"



J. V. BURTON, chairman of the course at Feilding



Spencer Digby photograph
A. E. CAMPBELL, chairman of the course at Christchurch

ordinary Secondary Schools, Technical High Schools, and District High Schools—will meet to re-examine their teaching programmes in the light of the report on post-primary education issued last year.

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they will examine that section of their programmes covered by the label Social Studies. It would clearly be impossible in one week to review the whole course of education and that will not be attempted. But if these two gatherings achieve the purpose for which they have been organised they will be followed by others, though "organise" is not the best word to use of assemblies from which many men and women have had to be turned away. We use it because there is technically an organiser, Mr. J. V. Burton, M.A., B.Sc., but we gathered from him in a brief interview the other day that his chief problem has been how to say No without giving offence.

"You have not had to appeal to teachers to come?"

"On the contrary, I have had to appeal to many not to come, and that has been very difficult."

"Where do they come from?"

"Every one of them. The Department is paying fares but not board; and in the case of some delegates board will mean hotel accommodation since we can't find room for them in the hostels."

"How about lecturers and discussion leaders?"

"We have a remarkably strong group in both cases—not only teachers, but specialists from the universities, and some from the business and official world: one, in fact, from your own world, a prominent journalist."

"And all this is disinterested zeal?"

"I think it is. Although, as I have said, the Department is bearing some of the expense, the whole responsibility for these conferences—refresher courses—or whatever you choose to call them—rests with the three groups of teachers in the Dominion: the N.Z. Educational Institute, the N.Z. Secondary Schools Association, and the N.Z. Technical Schools Teachers' Association."

"So we must stop thinking of teachers as experts in pay and allowances?"

"If you have been doing anything so unkind as that, Yes. But I don't think you have been."

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