

KINDERGARTENS AND THE WAR EFFORT

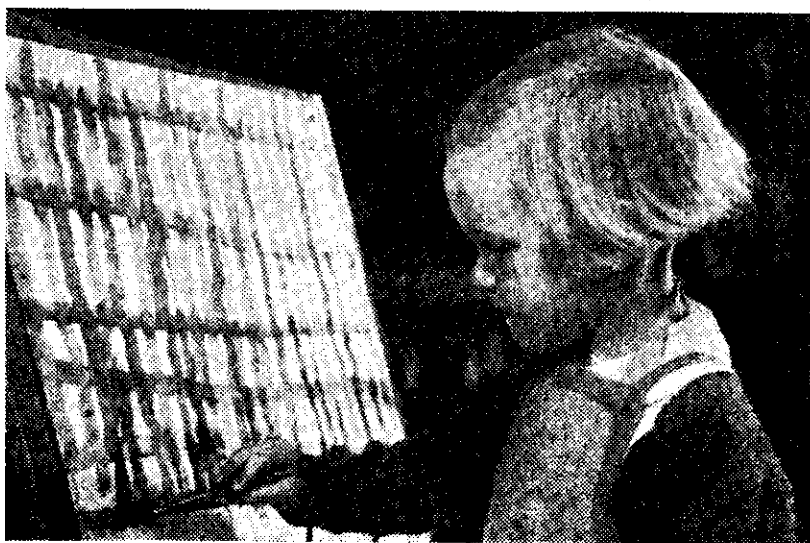
THERE wasn't any noise, and there wasn't any shouting, there was no quarrelling or pushing or shoving, but there were some dozen little children all very busy and all very happy. Some were hammering and some were climbing on a climbing frame, some were on a slide, and half-a-dozen at least were having a fine time in the sandbox. One or two were helping to water the garden. They were in a world that was made for them, where there was no scolding and where things were made specially for them to play with. Did we say all were happy? No, not quite all. One little Chinese girl came running up with tears on her face. She was very small. She looked even

There was a shelf full of empty preserving jars. "Yes, we will have to get to work to fill those, tomatoes especially. It may be hard if oranges are short to give the children all the vitamin C they should have."

"We are not taking any more children for mornings only, as from next Monday we are to be definitely an all-day kindergarten."

"Do you look on this as just a war effort?"

"It is a difficult question. The report I mentioned earlier seemed to show that there was a need for an all-day kindergarten quite apart from the war. At present certainly the change is part of a general plan to help mothers who want



younger than the necessary two and a-half years. She was looking for an adult hand to hold, and we felt flattered when the little hand found its way into ours.

"You see," the principal of the kindergarten told us, "she is new. She is very young, and she has been so much with her mother, and is not used to other children yet."

We were on a visit to one of the many free kindergartens that are to be found in the main cities of New Zealand. This was one where, very soon, there will be a big change.

"Last year," the principal told us, "the Education Department made a survey in Wellington to find out how many mothers of young children were working and whether there was a need for more day nurseries and kindergartens. And we have been asked to keep some of our kindergartens open for the whole day instead of just for the morning. We get a Government grant to make this possible."

A Big Difference

"This may not seem much of a change to you, but it makes a very big difference to us. The children may come as early as it is necessary for them to be left. Some will arrive at 7.30 a.m. That means a resident housekeeper. Then they will need feeding during the day."

She opened a door which revealed a newly-painted and equipped kitchen.

to work, and especially those with a special skill to do their share toward winning the war. But we do not look on kindergartens as places where mothers may dump their children. Our work is to help the child first. The small baby needs the security and routine of his home, and he needs his mother. But by the time a child is two and a-half to three, he develops a curiosity about the world outside his home. He needs playmates, and he needs to exploit all those new skills which he is learning to acquire. At this stage, his home often becomes cramping — especially in a crowded city. Mothers have their work to do, and they have their children round them all day and get irritable. It is at this stage that we feel the kindergarten comes into the picture. The kindergarten should give a child a foundation for community life."

Co-operation

The children had come in now from the playground, and sat round little tables eating slices of apples and drink-mugs of milk. As each child finished, he picked up his chair and moved it to the side of the room. When the tables were cleared away, we noticed the shy little Chinese girl, for all her two and a-half years, trying to help with the lifting of a little table.

"They like helping, and they learn to do it just by watching the others do it. There is never any need to force it or to scold," the principal said.

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