

long before the war. To-day we find some of them only accentuated. We admit the difficulties arising out of the war; but whatever these may be they must be treated as incentives to action, and not as excuses for inertia.

The N.Z.E.I. has set forth in a very definite manner the reforms, which in its opinion, our education system stands most in need of. Chambers of Commerce, Workers' Educational Associations and other public bodies must of necessity interest themselves in this movement, for the welfare of the nation demands a united many-sided interest in things educational, that our Empire may embody in its educational system suggestions for raising the whole standard of educational thought and activity.

Already there are signs that the publicity campaign is bearing good fruit. The people are at last beginning to awaken out of their long apathetic sleep. We only need a strong public backing, and in due course our politicians, who estimate the importance of every question in terms of votes, will realise that education in this Dominion has reached an important point in its development, when the people assign to it its just position among the things that count when the fate of the Empire is at stake.

Given this public support, we may then look for political action, expressive of the views recently stated by one of our Cabinet Ministers. "We (Cabinet) all feel convinced that education is the greatest problem in New Zealand to-day. Reform will come, and everything possible will be done to properly mould the character of our future citizens."

The call comes clearly and definitely to all interested in education to take some part in helping on the Educational Campaign now in progress, to the end that we may acquire knowledge concerning the real conditions of national strength, and of the things which are best worth knowing and having—the things which have absolute worth in themselves, and give their worth, as Aristotle says, to all other ends.

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OUR PLAYGROUNDS.

Our growing realisation of the value of education play, which is probably one of the happiest results of child study, is bringing with it the conviction that we have been very short-sighted in not providing sufficient suitable play areas for the children living in many of our urban and suburban districts. Although New Zealand is but a young country, overcrowded play-grounds are much too common in our cities, and many of the children of the present generation are growing up under conditions distinctly worse than those of the past generation in respect to space for daily play.

True, the matter has not yet become acute here, as it has, say, in crowded parts of New York, where I have seen three thousand children in one school, with no more playing space than that provided by the basement of the school building itself. But the case is already bad enough here, and will grow worse all too quickly if we fail to grapple with the difficulty, and overcome it while we may. Of course we shall have to spend large sums to acquire areas sufficient for the purpose, but if we realise that the expenditure will bring in a fine return in the improved quality of our future citizens, the funds will be forthcoming. If it were a matter of physical health alone, I believe the event would justify an outlay sufficient to enlarge every unduly small playground. But we can expect far more than this—nothing less, indeed, than an improved mental and moral fibre.

The old idea that play is merely an amusement—something supplementary to the real business of life—is not true of the child. Play, with him, is life. His interest is there; his effort is there. For him to play is to work. He does not realise that this is his preparation for his life's work; for him play is the all-absorbing work of the present. Such play as this is educational in the sense of Dewey's famous dictum: "Education is not preparation for life; it is life."

It would be interesting to speak of the social education of play, and also to deal with the various categories of play, such as experimental play, constructive play, acquisitive play, imitative play, and dramatic play, and to show "how each of these contribute to the hygiene of the mind and the spirit, contributing some element to the wholeness of the man towards

which all education should consciously be directed," but the scope of this short paper will not allow.

For play there must be space. Probably the most universal characteristic of children's play is activity of the whole body. It has been estimated that in the eighth year chase games outnumber all others in the ratio of 2 to 1, and they become more popular until the tenth year. Distant playing fields visited once or twice a week cannot provide for such activity. Space must be easily available many times a day.

For the strenuous team games, which become popular with early adolescence, marking a growing mental development, we shall probably never be able to provide fully in every playground, but it would be possible for our Education Boards to do what has been done in Edinburgh, and, no doubt, in some other cities. There in different suburbs the Education Board owns grounds with the necessary facilities for national games. By means of a rota each school within convenient distance receives its fair share of the use of the grounds, so that all in some measure are provided for.

I think we have not yet fully realised how the development of a co-operative spirit, engendering self-sacrifice and loyalty, as well as other admirable qualities, makes such games as football and cricket almost of supreme value in character building, when they are played under suitable conditions. In the school playground itself, if space cannot be found for these games, provision should be made for other team games, such as basket ball, so that children may by daily play develop the co-ordinate spirit essential to good citizenship.

But I have not space to discuss in detail how the playground should be laid out, so as best to achieve its purpose as the home of educative play. The first requirement is space!

I suggest that Parliament should order a return showing: (1) The number of playgrounds in New Zealand with sufficient area for the number of children to be accommodated.

(2) The estimated cost of making good the deficiency.

Then a scheme for the immediate or gradual acquisition of the necessary areas should be at once set into operation.

Such a work is of national importance, and is not unworthy of the consideration of statesmen!

H. G. COUSINS, M.A.

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Early to rise,
Wear your white ribbon
And advertise.