

MILK-IN-SCHOOLS SCHEME.

In 1936 the Government inaugurated the Milk-in-schools Scheme, the object of which is to make available to every child attending public and private primary schools and kindergartens, and, where desired, every child attending post-primary schools, a half-pint of milk each school-day, the milk to be supplied to each scholar at a regular hour each day.

The first distribution under this scheme took place at the beginning of the first term in 1937, when children in the four main centres were supplied with a half-pint bottle of milk, together with straws for drinking. At the end of March approximately 70,000 children in the Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, and Otago metropolitan areas, including suburbs, were receiving free milk; in addition there were partial schemes operating in Southland, Waikato, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, and South Canterbury, under which provision was made for approximately 23,000 children.

In the past many parochial schemes were in operation, and experience has shown that speedy improvement has followed the daily consumption of the milk ration, not only in cases of subnormal nutrition, but also in children considered to be in a normal condition of health. One headmaster in the Wanganui district stated that school attendance increased, the children did better work, and were not so weary at the end of the day; especially was this noticeable among girls from twelve to fourteen years of age, the majority of whom came from good homes, where the diet would have been considered adequate.

The success of the Government scheme is therefore undoubted, and its progress is giving much satisfaction to officers of this division. School Medical Officers have been asked to obtain data as to the physical measurements and general well-being of the children taking milk, and the position is being watched with great interest.

NUTRITION.

The subject of nutrition has been reviewed many times during recent years. All School Medical Officers this year note an improvement in the standard of average nutrition, although attention is drawn to the fact that many children of share milkers appear tired and listless, and in the towns the late hours and other unsatisfactory home conditions still account for a percentage of children failing to attain a normal standard of health.

DIET AND SCHOOL LUNCHES.

An investigation into the diet of school-children was submitted by Dr. Stevenson, Dunedin. A tabulation was made of the items of 14,727 meals answered by school-children of the upper departments of the elementary schools in Dunedin City, from which it would appear that the diets were deficient in fish, cheese, fruit, eggs, and milk. Vegetables were not so infrequently used as anticipated. Tea was not so frequently used as anticipated. From a study of the individual diets, Dr. Stevenson states that there is a wide range in the discipline and intelligence used in the choice of food for the children.

Dr. Deem made an examination of the school lunches at every school inspected, and reports as follows: "Speaking generally, the lunches were poor. Many of the children have white-sugar or jam sandwiches, or white scones, and some bring nothing but biscuits and cakes. Others buy their lunches, consisting generally of hot pies and cakes from the nearest pastry-cook shop."

Opportunity is taken by School Medical Officers during visits to schools to examine lunches, and the general report is that these are not as satisfactory as they might be. They are uninteresting, too many jam sandwiches (which are easy to prepare) being used. Although the "School Lunch" pamphlets are available for all parents and school-teachers, it is obvious that the suggestions therein are not being used to the fullest extent.

Dr. Wilson, referring to the nutrition of children in the Auckland District, reports: "It appears to me that headmasters are taking an increasing interest in the health and diet of the children. I notice this by the questions asked by the various headmasters, and the interest taken in the addresses on health given to the children."

HEALTH CAMPS.

A conference to establish a National Federation of Health Camps was held in Wellington on the 10th July, 1936, and was opened by the Hon. P. Fraser, Minister of Health. All existing health-camp organizations were invited to send delegates, and a fully representative meeting was held. Dr. Watt, Director-General of Health, presided, and Mr. Lambourne, Director of Education, was also present, together with a representative from the Post and Telegraph Department. It was explained that, in view of the rapid extension of the scheme and the widespread interest and generous assistance given by the general public, it was desirable that a Dominion organization be formed to ensure that available resources were utilized to the best advantage and some uniformity in policy established. It was evident that all present were anxious to co-operate in any measures that would result in a continuance of the voluntary status of the various associations conducting health camps, and which would promote the health and happiness of any children requiring health-camp treatment.

The following is a summary of the resolutions passed at the meeting:—

1. (a) That this conference approves the suggestion that a National Federation of Health Camps should be established throughout the Dominion.

(b) In the opinion of this conference the function of the State should be to co-operate by giving—

- (i) The assistance of experts, when required by camp executives, in matters of organization, education, medical supervision, &c.
- (ii) Use of public reserves and buildings available for camp purposes.
- (iii) Any financial assistance by way of subsidy from the health stamps or other funds, as may be necessary, such funds to be credited only to those associations joining the national society.

(N.B.—It must be understood that funds raised solely by the activities of any individual organization belong to that association; funds raised by the sale of health stamps must be apportioned by the local Central Council.)