

I am in full agreement with the views expressed by the Chief Medical Officer, and regular height-weight-chest measurements have been undertaken by School Medical Officers in the different districts in an endeavour to ascertain how much the milk ration is improving the nutrition of children. Although results from some districts show a satisfactory increase in both height and weight, it is not considered that sufficient numbers have been measured or sufficient time allowed to report more fully upon this at the present time. Some schools have undertaken special work in this direction, a detailed report being received from the Owairaka School.

From a survey of reports received and the fact that the incidence of subnormal nutrition again shows a decrease over last year's figure, it is apparent that the state of nutrition of the school child has improved considerably in recent years. That the improvement is general is indicated by the following extracts from several districts:—

Dr. McLaglan (Christchurch).—"The health of the children on the whole was very good."

Dr. Wilson (Auckland).—"I consider that the average nutrition of the school child has definitely improved during the last few years. Teachers and parents are now more interested in proper diet, fresh air, and health education generally."

Dr. Stevenson (Dunedin).—"The ration orders issued to the needy families upon sustenance have been decreasing each year owing to the many more operating employment schemes and better conditions."

PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

A National Council of Physical Welfare and Recreation has been formed in an endeavour to make provision for facilities for physical training and games not only for school-children, but for those over school age.

It must be recognized that every child is not suited for vigorous physical exercises and many suffer nervous strain through being forced into such activities. Optimum nutrition must be considered an essential to physical fitness, and every effort must be made to bring children up to this standard before commencing the physical-training programme. Medical inspection and supervision must be carried out, and the decision of the Medical Officer must be the deciding factor in assessing the amount of physical exercise or training to be undertaken by any child.

Every child should take part in the games suited to his physical condition. The question has been raised as to whether the schools are not spending too much time in training their teams—cricket, hockey, basketball, football—and leaving the remainder, the "barrackers," on the side-lines because they have not had the opportunity of taking part in or been taught the recreational pursuits most suitable for them. The 100-per-cent. children (I am pleased to state that there are Medical Officers who can find such) should be left to play their games, while care and attention should be centred on the remainder who are the problems; these require more specialized supervision—games and exercises carefully chosen, sufficient rest, and proper diet.

Evidence as to what can be done by a headmaster who is keen and interested in the physical well-being of his pupils is furnished by a report from the Headmaster of the Remuera School, who commenced an investigation, after the medical examination by Dr. M. Wilson of all children, in March. His report details the physical grouping of the children, the corrective exercise given for certain defects, the games and drill undertaken, and the indoor lessons given, and contains the following summary:—

"Since the inception of the special physical training and play activities a great improvement in physique and deportment is noticeable. The posture which previously was poor is now good, and all the children are definitely 'posture conscious.' However, I feel certain that good posture could be considerably assisted by having adjustable desks or a greater range in the existing type.

"There is also a greater mental alertness which is reflected in improved school-work. Besides the former improvements, the children show greater application, more initiative, greater trustworthiness, and reliability.

"The health of the children is much better and is reflected in less sickness, with consequent more regular attendance.

"Members of the staff are generally very well pleased with the improvement shown in the children and are of the opinion that the training should continue.

"My thanks are due to Dr. M. Wilson for her interest and thorough medical examinations of the children, to my staff for their excellent co-operation and assistance, and also to Miss M. B. Maxwell, physical training specialist, whose ability and enthusiasm have paved the way to success."

Very few schools are fortunate enough to possess a central hall or gymnasium where drill can be taken on wet or boisterous days. School Medical Officers note that they are unable to report upon any indoor class-room exercises; unfavourable weather in most schools would seem to mean "no drill."

Dr. Deem, in the course of her report states: "No primary school I have ever visited has a gymnasium, so the drill classes are conducted out of doors in fine weather, and not at all when the weather is wet. Many of the school grounds are excellent for drill and folk dancing, but for remedial work I consider that ground exercises are essential."