

in the case of disaster of any sort. These views were largely confirmed by my visit to the Leeds group No. 107, ten miles from Northcliffe. I arrived there about three in the afternoon, and had not time to await the return of all the men before I left. I closely interviewed three women and two men, and found the whole atmosphere full of enthusiasm. Of the original nineteen families, sixteen remain. One man had committed suicide in unusual circumstances, not connected with the merits of the scheme.

As regards the other two families who had left, the woman in each case found the isolation of country life more than she could endure, but I could discover no evidence that the families had suffered any distress as a result of their decision to leave.

The Leeds families whom I saw were previously occupied in Leeds as follows: H. E. Wilson, ex-service man and later a gardener; Bristow, motor-driver, Electric Light Co., Dewsbury; Foxcroft, leading seaman, R.N., for fourteen years, then helped his father in a public house. These families were still in shacks, quite near one another, and were all enthusiastic about the scheme and their prospects. They had no desire to return to Leeds, and considered that their group had been a great success. They were having a keen competition with group 96 in regard to the acreage which had been cleared in a certain time. There had been no quarrels worth mentioning within the group, unlike some neighbouring groups, who were, so they said, frequently disputing with one another. They attributed their success in no small measure to the fact that they all came from Leeds and neighbourhood, and that they had an excellent foreman. In the light of my subsequent experience with the Devon and Cornwall groups, I attribute the success mainly to the foreman, who was an exceptionally capable, decent fellow. I saw him eventually, all covered with grime as a result of the day's "burning-off" operations, and his appearance furnished eloquent testimony of his own hard work with his team. The families found it cheaper to get their groceries from Perth than from Northcliffe, and had no complaints to make in regard to them. They were able to go to occasional football matches and to dances in the schoolroom, and thought nothing of a three-mile journey through the bush at a late hour after the dance was over.

Devon and Cornwall.

9. I subsequently saw three Devon and Cornwall groups, which are in the Denmark area, but none of them is near another one. Group 116, as mentioned above, is thirty miles from Denmark, and the centre of group 113 is about twenty miles from Denmark. Group 114 is about fifteen miles from Denmark. Group 113 is a very scattered group, and is divided into two entirely separate portions, six miles distant from one another. Undoubtedly each end of this group should have been separately administered, as it is impossible for one foreman adequately to supervise both ends. Under present methods a working foreman would certainly have been allotted to each end of the group (see paragraph 12 regarding working foremen).

I arrived on group 116 about eight at night and went to a neighbouring shack, and eventually stayed there talking to as many settlers as the place would accommodate until nearly eleven. The united opinion of the settlers was that there was no special merit in coming together as one party from Devon and Cornwall. There was not necessarily any special tie, because one family came from, say, Honiton and another from Barnstaple. Coming from the same town was sometimes a positive source of trouble, as old scores or scandals were raked up, or, to use their own words, "the skeleton in the cupboard is dug up." Four of the Devon and Cornwall settlers had left, and the remaining settlers got on just as well with the settlers from other counties who took their place. I saw two of these settlers—Short, from Wolverhampton (an ex-insurance broker), and Ravenhill, from Gloucester (a Singer sewing-machine agent)—and they were of a very fine handworking type. I did not come across evidence of hardship amongst the settlers who had left. One of the wives had nominated her sister, and the general attitude of the meeting indicated that, except for sundry minor irritations, the scheme was excellent and the settlers were well contented. I noted a further phrase used at the meeting: "The Aussies treat us like gentlemen."

On my later visit to this group I interviewed two additional women, a Mrs. Hemmings and Mrs. Banbury. The former said the shacks could be made quite comfortable, and that she was quite content. Some of the settlers had had a bad time through illness, aggravated by the long distance to the doctor at Denmark and the then bad roads. (The road is now excellent.) A Mrs. Ould had died before the doctor could be got to her, a Mrs. Davy had lost her baby, and another woman had lost a little girl through meningitis. Mrs. Banbury had had a severe operation, but she was very cheerful and enthusiastic about the scheme, and said her children and her husband were happy and well, and that nothing would tempt either her or them away from the group.

On group 113 (the one divided into two halves) I found that no fewer than seven of the original twenty Devon and Cornwall settlers had left, including Dymond, the captain elected by Colonel Newcombe. The outstanding personalities on this group were an ex-R.E. sergeant-major, and an ex-Naval petty officer. The former was very well pleased, and he has a very valuable piece of swamp land and a fine son (at work), who is happy and contented. I asked him why so many settlers had left, and he said that some would not work well. They had got jobs in roadmaking and in the Denmark stores, &c. I again obtained no evidence of distress. He would not admit that the county scheme was a failure, but said that it would have been a greater success if all the settlers had been Devon-born. His argument was that some of the settlers, though living in Devon at the time of recruitment, were London-born, and so on.

The Naval petty officer and a group of other men put forward many minor complaints. These were all debated with the Field Supervisor, who showed great tact and patience in dealing with the matter. The meeting expressed itself as completely satisfied with the explanations which were given.

I found substantially the same situation on group 114. Eight of the settlers had left.