

The costs are not charged to the loan-moneys towards which His Majesty's Government contribute. The teachers in the schools seem to me to be very efficient, and they speak well of the capacity of the migrant children. The children sometimes come as far as three or four miles to school. Sometimes they ride on horseback, and it warms one's heart to see a child from, say, Bermondsey galloping along to school. Others walk or get a ride as best then can. They bring lunch with them, and it is a great pleasure to see them eating it outside amid the sunshine and beauty of the bush.

Some hardship was caused before the hospitals were erected, especially for maternity and accident cases. Now the settlers seem adequately provided for, though the great distance from Denmark to some of the groups administered from that town is still a drawback. I saw two settlers' young wives at Northcliffe who had very recently been confined, and they were full of delight at the comfort offered by the hospital.

Cottages.

20. I now come to some points which seem to me to require rectification. One of the most pressing of these is in regard to the speedy erection of cottages. The Oversea Settlement Delegation of 1923 reported that the cottages were usually erected on the blocks within a year of the formation of a group. This has proved to be by no means the general rule, and at Northcliffe, in particular, there are scores of settlers who came out over two years ago who are not yet in cottages. Many declare that they will not spend another winter in the shacks. A contract has been let which should have resulted in the cottages being completed during the current summer, but the contractor is far behind his contract, and, without exceptional measures on the part of the Government, many of the settlers will still be in shacks when winter comes. The Government are apprehensive of increasing the cost of the cottages, as the contract price is low; but I do not think that reasonable additional expense should stand in the way in this matter, in view of the liberality of the new migration agreement and of the fact that Northcliffe is in swampy country. The cottages are imperative to the comfort of the women, and the difference in the contentment of those in cottages and those in shacks was most marked. Among other inconveniences, it is practically impossible to keep the shacks free from fleas, which harbour in the sandy ground. I naturally impressed upon the settlers that in a big scheme of this description they could not have everything all at once, but, all the same, I think that two years in shacks ought to be the absolute maximum, and that the risk of leakages amongst the settlers would be reduced if this period could be further reduced to one year.

Up to date about 1,600 cottages have been erected on the groups as a whole for 2,273 settlers.

Religious Instruction.

21. Another point to which I attach supreme importance is the necessity for some means of religious instruction for the settlers and their children. Some of the religious denominations are doing what they can, but their efforts fall far short of the necessities of the case. Some of the settlers are endeavouring to run Sunday-school classes amongst themselves.

Further, the settlers badly need some independent person to advise, help, and encourage them. The most intelligent settlers are concerned over many matters of group administration. They complain of "red-tape" and irritating regulations, the absence of information about their liabilities and the plans the Department is developing to assist in their marketing problems. If some good athletic parson (of the Army Chaplain type) could be appointed in each of several suitable centres, I think that he would be of inestimable value altogether apart from his religious ministration. He would be the rallying-point for the feelings of the district; he would enable the settlers to blow off steam; would investigate grievances and bring genuine cases before the officials. The latter are only too ready to listen to complaints and to remedy them if they can; but in the real stress of day-to-day administration they cannot get into direct contact with the settlers in the way which is not only desirable, but, in my opinion, essential, if the right *esprit de corps* is to be maintained and leakages in the groups are to be prevented.

The parson would also be expected to organize the social life of the settlers. Many groups are already doing this to some extent, and sometimes regular weekly dances are held in the schoolrooms to raise funds for a piano, childrens' Christmas treats, and the like. At Northcliffe there is a flourishing football club, and one of the senior foremen acts regularly as referee.

Settlers have formed "progress associations" amongst themselves to help towards the objects described in this paragraph, but I consider that such associations would be greatly stimulated and strengthened by parsons of the right type.

The Press Delegation were so convinced of the necessity of more provision for the religious and social life of the group settlements that Lord Burnham told me that he was prepared to guarantee on their behalf that they would find the cost of one motor-car.

Publicity.

22. I have already alluded to the hunger which the more intelligent settlers have for more information. I asked the Department whether they could not issue a monthly group settlers' journal, in which information as to the more important changes of policy, hints on profitable crops, &c., could be given. They are already issuing to settlers free of charge a copy of a useful journal published by the Department of Agriculture, and thought that perhaps the time might come when they could issue a special settlers' journal, but they were somewhat fearful of the expense. I learn that the *Western Australian* newspaper has decided to start a special weekly column with the object of informing and encouraging the settlers.