

(f) The provision of the nucleus of a dairy herd. It frequently happened that when pastures were ready no cows were obtainable except perhaps at exorbitant prices, and the settlers had, and still have to some extent, the sad experience of seeing their pastures being wasted for want of stock to feed on them. There are now five thousand cows on the groups, and these have been recently supplemented by one thousand five hundred springers (heifers in calf) from New South Wales, which, though they will not yield milk at once, will soon add to the cow population.

Present Position.

5. There are now approximately 1,290 assisted British families on the groups, and in addition approximately 376 British families who either paid their own fares or came to Western Australia before the 25th September, 1922, the date on which the scheme under the Empire Settlement Act was inaugurated. I was immensely pleased at the high quality of the families whom I saw; and, while it is hard to account for the selection of a few families, I should like to pay a tribute to the way in which the selection work at Australia House has in the majority of cases been performed. I interviewed men who had followed almost every calling in the Old Country—to use a phrase which, alternatively with the word “Home,” is to my great delight universally and affectionately used throughout Australia. Amongst others, I interviewed a London policeman, a Leeds policeman, a bricklayer, a baker, two cabinetmakers, a Life Guardsman, an Artillery man, a Royal Navy officer (a foreman), a piano-maker from Camden Town, a Government Explosives Inspector, a signwriter, several engineers, an inspector in the Gas, Light, and Coke Co., a chauffeur, several butchers, a detective on the L.M.S. Railway, a laboratory assistant, a greengrocer, several sailors, a printer’s assistant, a railway fireman, a professional footballer, a platelayer, two legal clerks, a dock labourer, a grocer’s assistant from Harrods, an insurance broker, an insurance clerk, a painter, a crane-driver, and a motor-body builder, together with many men with previous agricultural experience. I have made careful notes of the individual experiences of these men and of their wives, but the unanimous opinion of the whole seems to be that the scheme is on right lines, that the settlers have a reasonable chance of success provided they can obtain a reasonable capitalization and a reasonable rate of interest, points to which I shall refer later. One phrase used by a settler sticks in my memory: “This is a land of golden opportunities, but not of feather beds.”

No complaint was made even by the ex-clerks in regard to the excessive nature of the work involved. Physical fitness rather than abnormal strength was the predominant requisite. Apparently all the men find themselves very fatigued and their hands very sore for about three months, but after that time their muscles and hands harden, and they find themselves so fit that they are able after the completion of the day’s work for the group to work on their own holdings so long as daylight lasts. Some complain of the foremen (to whom I shall refer later), others of the administration as a whole (though praising the general idea of the scheme), others of the red-tape of Government methods. One Scotsman assured me that he would not go back for a pension, and many declared that not even a free passage would tempt them to come home again except on a temporary visit. The great majority of the women whom I saw said that as soon as they were out of the shacks and in the cottages their cup of happiness would be complete. They are fast learning to make their own bread and cakes from home-made yeast, and generally to adapt themselves to country life and conditions. Several women from London itself assured me that they would not on any account return to England. With the exception of a few sad casualties the children are happy and well, and it is a very great pleasure to see them at work and at play at the bush schoolhouses. There was a welcome appreciation of the fact that, whatever may result so far as the parents are concerned, the scheme offers wonderful possibilities for the future of the children, of whom there are about five thousand.

6. I asked scores of the settlers whether they thought sufficient of the scheme to warrant endeavours to send an increasing number of additional settlers. Many stated that they had already nominated or recommended friends to come out, and others that they had no hesitation in advising me to send further migrants, provided they were fully informed beforehand of the nature of the work. Some claimed to have been mislead, but the London policeman—a recent arrival—stated that everything had worked out exactly as described.

Catterick.

7. I was specially interested in the two Catterick groups established at Hester, near Bridgetown. These groups have working foremen, to whom I allude in paragraph 12. The men were all lined up to receive Lord and Lady Burnham and their party, and it was one of the pleasantest experiences of my life to see a whole body of men and women so keen on their new life and so eager to describe their happy experiences that they all spoke at once, and almost behaved like a crowd of excited school-children who could not find words quickly enough to describe their new life. Mr. Mather, of the New Settlers’ League, takes a keen personal interest in the groups and visits them frequently.

The shacks (each on a separate block) for the third Catterick group, then on the high seas at least a month away, were all ready for their reception, complete with 1,000-gallon water-tanks, and the foreman was on the spot mapping out his area. This is significant from the point of view of future administration.

Leeds Group.

8. I made particular inquiries in regard to the Leeds and the Devon and Cornwall groups, and I went much prepossessed in favour of local recruitment by towns or counties. I thought, and still think, that local recruitment is easier than promiscuous recruitment; that it would create and maintain a permanent interest in the groups in Great Britain, and provide ready means for amelioration