

INTERNATIONALER ZIVILDIENST IN 1949

The greatest problem facing the Internationaler Zivildienst at the beginning of 1949 is that which harasses all welfare agencies, public and private, in Germany and Service Civil in all countries : the simple and sordid money problem.

IZD has recently resolved (and in doing so reaffirmed the basic principle of the SCI work-camp) that the criterion of choice of camps shall be that of the greatest need; and that in general the repair or building of dwellings shall be its chief concern. But where the need is greatest there also is the shortest purse. Several of the most desirable schemes have had to be turned down because the necessary camp expenses could not be met by those the work was intended for. It might be possible to organise money earning schemes; but these are viewed with disfavour for three reasons: firstly, they consume time and energy which could be used otherwise more effectively; secondly, the 'spirit' of a camp is dependant on the usefulness of the work being done; thirdly, there is a danger of causing unemployment by offering cheap labour (a point on which we are very sensitive).

Money can come from members' subscriptions, from private donations, or from grants from public funds. The first implies a large subscribing membership which might be enrolled through advertisement; the second likewise dependent on advertisement; the third is almost out of the question in Germany at the moment.

It has therefore been decided to organise a publicity campaign, and a committee has been appointed to work under the expert advise of a certain IZD member. A pamphlet is to be circulated to chosen men of property, an exposition of IZD achievements and ideas is to be given to the Press, and so on. The emphasis is to be on raising money rather than recruiting new members, for reasons mentioned below. The initial expenses will not be light, compared with the financial position of IZD, but money is urgently needed to carry out a programme of work suitable to the number of enthusiastic volunteers who wish to offer their service.

As a preliminary to the publicity campaign, and because the sheltering IVSP relief teams are leaving Germany at the end of March, IZD has applied for registration as an approved organisation in the British Zone.

If the weak point of IZD is the financial position, its strong point is undoubtedly the enthusiasm and energy of its local groups. At the very heart of SCI philosophy is the doctrine of doing a job oneself rather than waiting around for someone else to organise it for you; and it is cheering, if probably unexpected fact, that local group activity is probably stronger in Germany than in any other national branch. The main activity is week-end work schemes and social and discussion groups; but another important function is the preparation of longer camps, which are much more cheaply and efficiently organised on the spot than by long-distance action from the secretariat.

IZD has, up to now, been shy of rapid increase in membership. The ideal composition of a camp is considered to be one third experienced German, one third experienced foreigners, one third new German volunteers. This means that the growth of the movement is limited to the number who can be trained in the camps. Lately, however, membership which was previously limited to those who had done 12 days satisfactory service on a camp, was extended to those who have done the equivalent time on week-end schemes. This is undoubtedly a good policy since it encourages local group activity; and certainly greater willingness and sacrifice is demanded from the volunteers who qualify by week-end work than he who makes only single effort of going to a summer camp. It has now been suggested that any large influx of applications for membership could be dealt with by the setting up of local groups wherever two or three applicants live in the same place with the instructions to 'get on with the job' themselves and advice on how to do it.

It is now accepted policy of IZD to hold, where possible, consecutive camps in one place, so that a nucleus of keen volunteers can be formed in the neighbourhood and a more lasting impression made on the local people. This previously accepted policy made IZD all the more favourably disposed to what is called the 'valley project' which was proposed a short while ago by our international secretary. This, briefly, is a suggestion that several camps should be run simultaneously in the same area by different member organisations of our work-camp group, doing work which would link up into a unified scheme over the area.

The organisation and supervision would be undertaken by an international committee in co-operation with the national branch concerned and the local authorities and firms involved.

IZD hopes to submit suggestions for such a scheme in Germany to the next international delegates' meeting. Bunker dwellers and refugees have been mentioned as alternative possible beneficiaries.

IZD has been very happy to welcome the new AFSC work-camp representative in Germany, and problems of co-operation in the organisation of work-camps are under view. It is established that the joint camps run last year were not altogether successful and in future camps will either be completely SCI or completely AFSC. Volunteers will be exchanged freely, however, and there is a possibility that AFSC will give active help to pure IZD camps.

The isolated Berlin group continues to be a source of concern. The question of whether or not to apply for registration is once again under review. Meanwhile week-end tree-stump-grubbing has been going on during the winter to provide much-needed fuel for old people, and a six-week international camp is planned for the summer.

THE WORK PROGRAMME

EASTER

There is enough work in Germany for those willing to wield pick and shovel. The extent of the programme depends chiefly on the number of volunteers available from Germany and abroad - granted, of course, the necessary funds to carry out the organisation and finance the camps. Four camps were planned for Easter, but the number of volunteers makes possible at least one more. The number of foreign volunteers is not as high as could be wished; but summer is the only possible time for many, and others prefer the better weather and longer camps that occur in Summer.

The camps will be run from April 3 to 21. The following are planned :

1. Kassel (US Zone)
Clearing of rubble and preparation for the repair and extension of a damaged house to be used as a training home for wandering youth. The home is being built by the Kurhessischer Jugendring (council of local youth groups). Kassel is in one of the worst damaged towns in Germany.
2. München (US Zone)
Preparation for the extension of a hostel of young workers and students which is being built by the Bavarian Jugendring. The work consists in levelling the ground on which the building will stand.
3. Holm-Seppensen (British Zone)
Excavation for the cellar of a children's convalescent home for the German Quakers.

Possible camps are :

4. Duisburg (British Zone)
Clearing away the rubble and cleaning of old bricks in preparation for the repair of a house as a home for wandering youth and young workers. Local catholic enterprise is responsible for the scheme.

5. Cologne (British Zone)

Repair and extension of a bunker for use as a Youth Hostel.

Camps one and two are in new territory, and it is hoped that they will give the chance to form active groups in the two towns. Camp three is organised by the Hamburg group which has already been doing week-end work there.

SUMMER

The programme is not yet complete. If the Easter camps at Kassel and München are successful, summer camps will be held in both places. It is also hoped to hold a camp in Rhineland. The present certainties are :

1. Berlin

Six weeks. The Berlin group plans to help in the preparation and partial rebuilding of huts to be used as a remand home or youth prison. The youths are at present housed, very pathetically, in an inferior camp in the US Sector. The house is a new experiment in Germany and was introduced by the American Welfare Authorities. The 250 youths (the figure is at the moment increasing) are housed in progressively increasing freedom and comfort and are finally allowed to work for private firms and factories in the neighbourhood. All those worthy of trust are allowed to visit home fortnightly. The lads are from 14 to 21 years of age and most of them obviously only need a little of the right sort of encouragement and environment.

The encouragement they already get as far as is possible, from the staff of the camp; but extreme primitiveness of life at the home (the lads possess, for instance, no towels and few have changes of

Clothing) can be of little value in offsetting the outside conditions which have already got them into trouble. At the summer camps, the lads will work alongside our volunteers (some of them have already taken part in the week-end stump-grubbing) and it is desirable that the foreign volunteers should be carefully chosen for their maturity and their willingness to make friends with such strangers as these lads.

2. Donaueschingen (French Zone)

Eight weeks. The town has planned a settlement for refugees, who already live in the neighbourhood. The refugees themselves will help with the building and will later be able to earn their living in the district. Our work will be levelling of ground, excavating, and perhaps actually a building of more houses.

3. Rendsburg (British Zone)

Eight weeks. A similar scheme to the above. The local refugee organisation, by doing some of the work itself hopes to enable the town either to build more dwellings or to save money for other welfare purposes. We shall help the organisation by doing excavating work.

The above three camps will be organised by the Berlin, Freiburg and Schleswig Group respectively.

Bill Bowman