

To :  
Int.Sec.  
A.F.S.C. Germany  
I.Z.D. Germany

I.V.S.P.  
3 Cromwell Road  
London S.W. 7

21 Sep 50

## VOLUNTEERS CAMP REPORTS

### EVESSEN

#### Rosemary Jackson:

The camp . . . had its own particular problems, not so much because of material inconveniences, unavoidable and there for 'all in a days work' . . . (e.g. the water being turned off at the main when we most needed it, mud living space, etc.) but one or two questions with regard to the work which came up invariable at housemeetings.

- (1) working 10 hours a day. Volunteers often dropped off to sleep during the evenings activities.
- (2) Some felt that the work could easily have been done in 8 hours. Later, Wednesday afternoon was free.

Rumours concerning the conditions of employment of the volunteers made many uneasy - e.g. that the firm for which they were working was making a profit from their work, and the work could better have been done by unemployed. The architect in charge explained the conditions, but the camp was still not quite satisfied.

Some annoyance was caused because the foreman gave orders direct to volunteers instead of via the leader.

They were also annoyed because the shopkeepers with whom they dealt were told privately by an official not to include sweets and cigarettes in the items chargeable to the camp accounts.

The employees of the firm for which they worked did not understand the idea of IZD.

Apart from the above problems I personally felt this camp to be one of the best experiences I have had. There was always this feeling of constructive achievement - that everything one was doing - even peeling spuds, - was going to help build up this farm. There was always, despite the above doubts, the sense of urgency, that the houses must be finished, the strawberries planted, etc. . . .

Also sharing conditions with the Siedlers themselves . . . We learned a tremendous amount from them and made some real friends. . . . They entered very well into discussions and social events. Being situated in the country also helped the group life. Another good thing was that the Silent Meeting took place regularly and none of the volunteers were ever absent. I cannot help feeling that this was one of the main reasons for the group life being as complete as it was.

#### Robert Shanks:

Terribly impressed with the spirit of the group for working together. Suggests that more than an 8-hour day is too much - for those who are out of training and who must not return to their jobs tired out. The longer hours resulted in serious loss of sleep, which was made up at every available moment. Diet and cooking were very inadequate. We suffered some hardships through terrible hunger. Unbalanced diet might be dangerous - especially for Americans who spend a longer time in Europe. Suggests that camps are provided with list of minimum diet and suggestions for simple cooking.

#### Joyce Heslop:

"Not what I call a good camp, although it had the possibilities of so being. It was a mistake to adopt the living conditions of the refugees they worked with. The 10-hour day was too long."

She thinks the refugees suffered from the long hours too.

## LEBACH / SAAR

### Henry Nelson :

Camp discussions: I find that there is now less tolerance of others People's opinions and a greater inclination to push ones own views down other people's throats. When any problem of international importance arises, volunteers tend to discuss the question from a national point of view, thus actuating the differences between different peoples, instead of applying sound and basic principles. Before the war in SCI camps there was in my opinion a greater international spirit, more in keeping with the principles of SCI. Today we seem to be straying from this broad principle of tolerance. Not only are the discussions narrower in outlook and point of view, but it seems to me that they take as emotional rather than a logical turn, resulting in feelings being hurt and suspicions being sown. Finally, I have a feeling that there is less and less desire on the part of volunteers to discuss international problems and that their interests tend to be more personal.

Silent meetings: You may remember one AGM about three years ago, I spoke about Quaker influence changing the basic principles of SCI and instanced the Quiet or Silent Meeting. From conversation with volunteers from different countries (both Quaker and non-Quaker) I gather that this is now more or less accepted practice, one half hour silent or quiet meeting. I know that the quiet meeting is more compulsory but there is a sort of indirect persuasive force making volunteers feel they ought to attend. I view the half hour silent meeting a contrary to the Constitution of SCI and also as not being the original intention of Pierre Ceresole. I personally would like to see a return to the "Moment de silence" which lasted up to one minute, when all members were seated at the table for meals. Those who felt they needed to meet for a silent quarter or half an hour could arrange it amongst themselves. It seems that we have now arrived at the stage when the half hour silent meeting appears on the daily time table as part and parcel of camp life.

Before I close I should like to make it clear that these two points are by no means a reflection against the camp at LEBACH. I found the camp an exhilarating experience and the work ( for blind and deaf children ) particularly worth while; while the social, economic and political set-up of the Saar gave enhanced value to a camp of international goodwill.

You will probably consider the two points I have made of little or no importance. I felt I would like to mention them, although I realise I have done so sketchily and inadequately.

### Conrad Leser :

There is little for me to criticise and much to praise. Conditions were almost ideal we had beds, washrooms, showers, dining and common rooms, all cooking done for us, no walking to and from the work, a swimming pool quite near, etc. Some volunteers thought so much comfort really undesirable, but I do not share their opinion. I think that the pleasant conditions and the fact that we could concentrate on the work without having to spend many working hours on keeping the camp going greatly helped us to get something done. Thus, things were for the mutual advantage of the volunteers and of the project.

The work – mainly with pick, shovel and wheelbarrow – was hard but not too heavy, and the sisters took part in all but the heaviest jobs; moreover, it was varied and interesting. We worked for 48 hours but these included two daily breaks of almost half an hour each. These breaks were essential in view of the meal system in which the "second breakfast" and "afternoon coffee" played quite an important part. The service appears to have been highly successful. The weather indeed has been very favourable. Our first task, to convert a piece of forest into a garden for blind children, was completed. On our second task, to build a playground for the deaf-and-dumb children, a good start was made. This job was never meant to have been completed by us alone; it was hoped that a machine would be available to assist, but it did not arrive while we are there.

That the service made some impact on the local community was shown by the thanks we received from all sides : from the director of the school, the mayor of Lebach an a high official who visited the camp. IVSP also got some useful publicity through a press and a film reporter who spent a day at the camp; as a result an article appeared in a weekly newspaper and pictures in a cinema newsreel.