

March, 3rd  
IZD Lager Donaueschingen

Dear Meta Walter

Here are some of my comments about the SCI camp in Donaueschingen where I have worked for six weeks. The camp has improved recently, partly due to the change in volunteers. I suspect that some of those who had recently left were here too long, both for their own happiness and for the general welfare of the camp. The daily routine here is fairly smooth although interrupted by periodic worry about fuel supply, the complaints about the food brought to the baustelle (sometimes merely warm potatoes, bread, and an apple), and talk about the value of the weekend services. The camp seems more relaxed this last week when the free time program was intentionally made much smaller and hence there was more time for rest and for personal leisure. I am sure that many of our problems here are those which do not exist in a short term summer camp.

I do wish that more of us felt pleasure and joy in the actual work on the houses at "Neue Heimat". Bill Sayre was one of the very few who seemed truly to enjoy what he was doing - that is the actual labour. Perhaps this is too much to ask of many volunteers. But I miss the lack of talk about and interest in the work on the houses. This does not mean that there is not much discussion of the workmen on their views. Perhaps the fact that so few of the people here are skilled workers may contribute to lack of interest in the job (The inclement weather may have something to do with the lack of "joy" on the job). There was also a time when some of us felt that we were not being given enough work for eight hours. This situation has recently improved. Some of us were also disappointed in learning that more than half of those who will live at "Neue Heimat" are not refugees. We lack a sense of urgency in the work perhaps - and if we were doing our own planning of the work, we would probably feel more vitally involved in each day. The landrats' talk about "Neue Heimat" did give me a more appreciating view of what we are doing.

A suggestion made at a recent house meeting is one which I believe very important. It is the possibility of having 1 - 2- 3 German boys from one of the homes (who is capable of doing the work with us) who would like to share our life. In Frankfurt the Jungen Bleibe seemed to me a most depressing life for the homeless boys living there. Might not some of these enjoy life in an SCI camp and might they not benefit - and the camp - from such an experience. I realise that this involves many problems and careful selection, but it seems to me that SCI works too much with THINGS - materials to build houses - and not enough with people. A few boys of this sort - without sufficient work in the large German cities - would give an interest to the camp beyond that of the house constructions.

I have another problem that is very old for SCI - that of whether we in anyway are a cause of unemployment. Recently "Neue Heimat" dropped four workers; and without our knowing why, one worries that there was not enough work for all of us. Still - ?

One morning on the baustelle the volunteers were asked to help move, during regular working hours, the belongings of the asst. architect (I believe he is this) named Kunert the SCI camp spent about an hour and one half of the work day, about eight workers, moving this one settlers furniture into his new house. I do not believe the camp should engage in this kind of work (even when asked by Fritz) during our working hours unless we are going to help all the other settlers move into their homes. We have helped some settlers after work was over for the day. This is not a matter of great weight, but one which indicates, I think, a certain attitude towards volunteer labour. I have learned so much in my six weeks here and feel it an experience of very great value. I go on now to an Eastercamp of AFSC.

Yours

Bob Stoel

Note :

Perhaps a bit more care on part of the national secretaries in sending volunteers. We have had at least one conspicuous failure here (on every count) in last week and it tends to drag down the whole group.