

CATHOLIC CHILD EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

INTRODUCTION

In 1934 it emerged that a number of Catholic parents had approached the non-Catholic Child Emigration Society asking for their children to go to Australia. It appears that Catholic children went via the Salvation Army and the Fairbridge Scheme. As the Catholics had no similar scheme the CES felt entitled to arrange Catholic child migration to Australia. The number of children going to non Catholic homes was unknown. It was a repeat of history and the early Rescue days, shades of Cardinal Vaughan and Barnardo's

It was decided to extend Catholic child migration and send children to Australia. The Catholics were to compete with Fairbridge either by "cooperating with the Clontarf Farm School Scheme" or some other method. It was said that "so long as we leave all the child migration work to Protestants, it is difficult for us to complain when they do the work". As Fairbridge had the backing of the Prince of Wales, a similar scheme was looked to.

This was provided in the form of Clontarf Farm which had been discussed as early as 1926 by the Catholic Immigration Reception Committee. In 1927 the CIRC had again approached the Emigration Committee of the Society of St Vincent de Paul this time about the Clontarf orphanage run like the proposed farm, by Christian Brothers. The CIRC wanted the Emigration Committee of the SVP to approach the Overseas Settlement Committee to obtain their consent and also the Commonwealth authorities at Australia House to contribute to the passage of 50 orphans to Western Australia aged 10-12 years with some 13 year old boys. The financing of the boys once they were established would be the same as for the Fairbridge Scheme ie. Imperial Government £6.6s the Commonwealth £4.3s per week per boy and the State Government a grant of £4.3s per week. The Christian Brothers would do the teaching subject to state inspection. They would also be trained in outdoor work. It was stated that "boys were reluctant to leave when the inevitable time arrives. The orphanage also took "many" non-Catholics. Lack of teachers resulted in the boot and carpentry shops being closed down but plans were afoot to re-staff them.

The letter was keen that Clontarf Farm was not mentioned in future correspondence "for very special reasons ... it is not desired to bring same under notice for some time yet". Thus a few months embargo was imposed on the mention of Clontarf Farm.

By 1934 when the CEA became interested in Clontarf it was now beyond embargo and negotiations got under way. Minor negotiation in 1928 had failed through the inability of the CIRC in Australia to secure the training and supervision for boys aged 14-17 years. Enquiries had also been made by CEA in Australia to ascertain