

AUSTRALIAN MIGRANTS

A CONSIDERATION OF THE CONDITIONS OF THE TIME

PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The following is an examination of the post-war migration of children from this country to Australia with particular reference to the conditions and ideas that were present during those years from the end of the war to the mid 1950s.

THE RATIONALE USUALLY GIVEN

When criticisms are made of the policies of voluntary child care agencies and indeed the Government of this country in sending children to Australia, the rejoinder is very often on the following lines: that we thought we were doing the best for the children at the time, that prospects in the United Kingdom, for children such as these, were poor, that there were many more advantages in Australia, that the children would be destined for a life here in residential care, and within all this the United Kingdom was somewhat run down, depressed and with little hope for the future. It is also said that migration "was primarily a government policy". This is really only half the story because although this was something the government sought, it was also very much fostered by the voluntary child care agencies. The latter were far from being passive bystanders. This document will counter all these views and will therefore come to the conclusion that judged by the prevailing standards of that time our child care policies and practices should instead have developed strategies, known about then, to care for these children in the U.K.

THE FOUNDATION STONES OF THE WELFARE STATE

First we need to transport ourselves back to 1945. The war was over and although the country's material infrastructure was in very poor repair, there was a great deal of optimism. The Government had been elected with a clear mandate not to return to the social and economic conditions of the 1930s. In this endeavour it is often forgotten that they were backed by the important foundation stones that had been laid by the coalition government which ran the country for most of the war. Amongst these foundation stones were the Beveridge Report, the Butler Education Act and the Curtis Report, this last of which more later. The war also made people realise that our fragmented health services were not up to the mark and certainly during the war they had to be massively reorganised, indeed almost nationalised so that the health needs of everybody could be met during the emergency.