



An Australian Branch of International Social Service Founded

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AN AUSTRALIAN BRANCH OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE FOUNDED

AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF CONSIDERABLE interest to social workers throughout Australia was made recently in Sydney by the Hon. Justice A. V. Maxwell, Senior Puisne Judge, Supreme Court of New South Wales. Mr. Justice Maxwell is Chairman of the Committee of Management of the recently established Australian Branch of International Social Service. He was announcing the opening of the branch on March 1st, 1955.

International Social Service (or "I.S.S.," as it is popularly called) has offices in the Family Welfare Bureau building at the corner of Martin Place and Phillip Street, Sydney. The Director is Miss Constance Moffit who was formerly on the staff of the Department of Social Studies, Sydney University, and who has had several years of experience in international social work in Europe with U.N.N.R.A. and I.R.O. Also on the staff as case worker is Miss Marcia Speers, a graduate of the Department of Social Studies, Sydney, who returned recently from England where, after completing the Mental Health Course, she had worked for some time in Child Guidance Clinics.

Many social workers already know I.S.S. as an international voluntary non-sectarian, non-political agency which has been operating in European countries for many years. I.S.S. was actually established in 1921, shortly after the First World War. It was then known as the International Migration Service and came into existence as the result of a survey undertaken by a committee appointed by the World's Y.W.C.A. This survey, which touched ten countries, revealed the helplessness of migrants and aliens in the face of complicated official instructions and restrictive laws of immigration and emigration in various countries, and the fact that exploitation of foreigners was common because of inadequate protection by Government or other bodies. The head-quarters of I.S.S. is in Geneva. It has branches in most countries of Western Europe, in U.S.A. and in several South American countries. Its oldest branch is in France where it is known as "Service Social d'Aide aux Emigrants." This branch was able to keep functioning throughout the war, but in many other countries of Europe the branches ceased to operate during hostilities and have been re-organised since. In the countries of Eastern Europe, however, the branches have not yet been able to reform.

The decision to open an I.S.S. Branch in Australia was taken as the result of the rapidly growing demand for inter-country social services to meet the numerous and complex individual problems associated with this country's extensive immigration programme. The agency's headquarters sent to Australia a member of its international staff, Miss Florence Boester, with authority to conduct negotiations for the inauguration of an I.S.S. national branch. Miss Boester was in Australia eight months. She left in April for Japan where she is associated with the American Joint Committee for assisting Japanese-American

orphans. This Committee has called on the assistance of I.S.S. to help it carry out its large programme of inter-country adoptions.

In Australia, I.S.S. will function in co-operation with government departments in all States, consular offices, approved social welfare agencies and other recognised community organisations. It aims to supplement and complement their work but not to duplicate existing services. It will act as liaison between agencies in Australia and its branches in overseas countries. The I.S.S. programme is a wide one, and there is only one criterion for eligibility. I.S.S. can help with any kind of social problem which requires for its solution contact in another country. Naturally, most of the people here who have this kind of problem are migrants, New Settlers, but they need not be. Australians living abroad for instance, who have some difficulty might just as easily become the concern of I.S.S.

The following are typical of the services I.S.S. can offer:

(1) Social and technical services to assist individuals in their immigration (or emigration or repatriation),

(2) Arranging for interest-free loans toward the passage fares of immigrants,

(3) Assisting with travel arrangements for unaccompanied children and other individual migrants,

(4) Helping to reunite families broken by migration,

(5) Locating relatives with whom contact has been lost,

(6) Giving social and technical assistance to effect inter-country adoptions of children,

(7) Assisting individuals who have problems concerning marriage, divorce, child protection, citizenship status, compensation claims, social security benefits, and the like, where interpretations of the laws and regulations of different countries is involved.

(8) Counselling and otherwise assisting in the solution of problems arising from inter-country marriages and war-time alliances,

(9) Procuring for individuals and agencies in Australia authentic information from other countries on such matters as citizenship requirements, legal protection, social conditions, cultural pattern, refugee problems, and assimilation schemes. Similarly, I.S.S. Australian Branch will inform I.S.S. national branches in other countries concerning the laws, customs, and social programmes of Australia.

Postal Address: The Secretary, International Social Service, C/o Family Welfare Bureau, Martin Place, corner Phillip St., Sydney, N.S.W.