

N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Vol. XII, No. 50.

Friday, May 26, 1939.

Registered as a newspaper under the G.P.O., Wellington, N.Z. Price 4d 26/5 23

24 LITTLE VICTIMS OF EUROPEAN SAVAGERY FIND A REFUGE IN N.Z.

Jewish Benefactor Shelters Children From Poland In His Wellington Home

(By "Record" Special Investigation Reporter)

Max Deckston is childless.

But in his home, a big, rambling house in Wellington's Newtown, live twenty-four children, little victims of European savagery.

Max Deckston provides everything that is implied in the word HOME for these young Jewish refugees from Poland.

This benefactor does his work quietly and without asking the help of anyone. He has done everything himself, paid for everything himself.

Twenty-four children live under his roof, but there is room for more and arrangements are now being made to bring eight more friendless, homeless little sufferers from Europe.

To-day the "Record" brings its readers an exclusive picture of this benefactor's home and his philanthropy.

"UNCLE," as Mr. Deckston is known to all the children, was born in a part of Russia that is now Lithuania

"but will soon be part of Germany," as he says. Forty-two years ago he came to New Zealand. As an orphan himself, he knows the pangs and heart throbs of being homeless, and alone in a country where he is a foreigner and a "refugee."

But as a stranger he dug his toes in and earned his way in the new land. From a small business he turned to farming for 15 years, and then back to business. He has been retired for a number of years, devoting all of his time to the care of his institute.

His first great philanthropy was to his relatives, for whom he financed the passage to New Zealand to years ago. Among the group, 40 all told, were many who were not related to him, either by blood or creed, and many who were his wife's relatives. Then, in 1932, he began the enterprise that marks to-day the magnitude of his heart. He brought to New Zealand one orphan girl.

To-day she is his chief assistant in supervising the care of the others in his, and their, home.

Quick At School

FOUR years ago the first group of 12 orphans and children, with only one parent, arrived in New Zealand. Today they are well on their way to becoming citizens of whom New Zealand can be proud.

The children began by showing an scholastic prowess that makes them the criteria in their schools. Isaac went through four primers in one year. Ellen completed five standards in three and a half years, and Shirley skipped from standard four to standard six in one year. And most of the rest

of that first group have some academic honour to make them proud. In fact, the child who hasn't done better than one standard in the required time is the unusual one.

The second group that came over a little more than two years ago has continued to keep the institute's high standard of learning. They speak English now with practically no accent, and the first group regards its native tongue as the foreign one, speaking English with no trace of accent.

Jewish Faith

BECAUSE Mr. Deckston's wife believed (she died two years ago) that all children should keep, only a cook is kept to staff the big house where the children live.

Although single beds are provided for each child, the younger children frequently double up during the winter after the lights go out. "Kids are that way," says Mr. Deckston with a parental chuckle.

BESIDES SEPARATE DORMITORIES AND BATHS FOR THE BOYS AND GIRLS, THE HOUSE CONTAINS A LARGE RECREATION ROOM, A QUIET RECEPTION ROOM FOR VISITORS AND FRIENDS, AND TWO KITCHENS, COMPLETE WITH SEPARATE DISHES, CUTLERY, AND TABLES. THIS LAST IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH JEWISH FAITH WHICH REQUIRES SEPARATE UTENSILS FOR MILK DISHES. BREAKFAST IS EATEN IN ONE ROOM, AND THE OTHER TWO MEALS IN THE OTHER.

The recreation room, on Sunday nights, is the scene of a disorder that only the true parent can appreciate and enjoy. For that night the music teacher comes, and the whole group gets together for a party. Those who aren't taking lessons are dancing to the

radio, some of the boys box in the corners, and the rest contribute to the hilarious uproar as best they can, with probably a few native methods of noise-making to celebrate a gay time in juvenile fashion.

Think For Themselves

THERE is a special clothes locker for each child. And "Uncle" sees to it that each one is kept immaculate. This, too, is part of the training of Mrs. Deckston. Having aided her husband in creating the institute, it has become a commemoration to her spirit since she died.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Deckston ate all their meals with their "family" and Mr. Deckston still does. He does all the buying for the table in wholesale lots at the daily markets. A large butcher's electric refrigerator keeps the food fresh.

The four oldest children, two boys and two girls, are attending secondary school, and the boys also attend, three nights a week, trade classes at the technical college. One of the elder boys is apprenticed as a motor mechanic to a garage.

For those who want it, Mr. Deckston intends to provide university education. None of them has reached the age for university entrance yet, although one of the girls is nearly ready. She will

(Turn to next page.)

Richard Andrew took these pictures of Max Deckston's big family for the "Record." In Wellington, and far from the oppression of Europe, these young refugees indulge in the peaceful pastimes of sewing, bed-making, sleeping.

