THE SECRETARY.

1. On the 19th instant, accompanied by Inspectress F. Stewart and Mr. R. C. Osborne of this Department, I visited St. Joseph's Farm School, Bindacon for the purpose of inspection. Brother V. T. McDonald, the Manager, was present and accompanied me on a tour of the buildings.

2. I saw each of the 82 migrant boys in attendance, two being absent by absconding. These lads have since been located and returned to Bindacon, but remain aware of the circumstances of their case. At the outset, Brother McDonald stated that the majority of his staff was on holiday and he was carrying on with the assistance of various Brothers temporarily resident at Bindacon for a holiday and as the boys themselves were on holiday the discipline and general routine of the Institution had been relaxed. This was apparent. Brother McDonald further stated that the 46 boys admitted on the 10th December, 1947 have generally proved to be restless and troublesome and in the initial stages he did not have their confidence. He felt that to rigidly enforce discipline and routine at that stage would have caused a good deal of trouble, but claims that he has now gained the confidence of these boys with some success. I agreed that it was essential to have the confidence of these boys, but that discipline and cleanliness should at all times be maintained.

3. On arrival it was observed that large numbers of the boys of all ages were employed in work on and about the building in course of erection. One party was preparing for the erection of concrete walls for the open-air picture show, whilst another, comprising five 15-year-olds and three or four younger boys, was engaged on what was described as a machine to make cement bricks. Others were handling quarried stone and digging holes, which is a laborious job at this particular time of the year owing to the hard nature of the ground. I questioned Brother McDonald in this respect and was informed that there was no compulsion on the school lads to engage in these jobs, but that they voluntarily did so and invariably gravitated to the normal working parties of trainee boys and Brothers and, for want of something to do, assisted them. It was later mentioned that, in selecting lads to comprise a cricket team and followers when playing away from Bindacon, preference was given to the lads who had proved the most willing workers within the last week.

4. The general appearance of the boys was quite reasonable, although some were in a rather grubby state. This can only be expected as the ground is particularly dusty and dry and they must invariably gain a certain amount of dirt in their work and play. Their general personal hygiene was also of a reasonable standard, but I drew Brother McDonald's attention to the necessity to maintain a high standard in this respect, particularly in regard to well-cut hair, clean finger-nails and other personal matters. He promised to give this particular attention.

5. Three dormitories are in use for the younger boys and two verandahs of the dormitory building for the elder and trainee boys. All were inspected and, although they offer the main essential of a dormitory, that is a satisfactory bed for each lad and clean and ample bedding, with a coil mat and a chair beside each bed, the general atmosphere is not impressive. The cement floor and dark wooden ceiling tend to give a heavy appearance and the lack of suitable lookers tends to no general orderliness in storing change of clothing and those personal knick-knacks invariably collected by a young lad. Brother McDonald
stated in these respects that it was his intention at some future
date to use the wooden ceilings for a parquetry floor and to
re-call in a modern manner, to paint in light pastels and to
provide a locker for each lad. He claimed difficulty in
procurings the latter. I impressed upon him the urgent necessity
in respect of the dormitories.

6. The shower and change rooms in the dormitory
buildings are equipped with six showers on each side, but only
one side is connected to water (hot and cold). A small brick
wall has been erected across the middle of the room to provide
some measure of privacy and to facilitate drainage. A wire
basket of nail-brushes and some soap was on the floor. I would
suggest that provision be made for suitable tooth-brush racks,
soap containers and towel racks. Clean towels were in evidence
beside each bed. The change room and ablution section of the
new building are in use.

7. The kitchen and dining-rooms were seen. The
kitchen range smokes rather badly. Although attention has
been given to this no improvement has been effected. The mid-day
meal being served consisted of soup, stewed meat, potato and
carrot. Pies were rather bad; neither the kitchen nor the
dining-room is equipped with fly-wire. I saw the boys during
their meal and although they had consumed the above food there
appeared to be ample supplies of bread, butter and jam. I was
informed that the main meal of the day is now served in the
evening. Table-cloths were not in use and it was stated that
they had been dispensed with for the duration of the holidays.
Further china and cutlery cupboards have been installed.

8. Laundry: Heavy laundry is despatched to Perth
weekly, but a certain amount of lighter work is required to be
done at the Institution. The laundry consists of two cement
tubs, not connected to water and, outside this room, a copper
trough and several buckets; earthen floor. The facilities are
primitive and it would be most difficult to carry out the
required work; it could not be expected that the domestic staff
would tolerate these conditions.

9. Recreation: The recreation room showed no signs
of use. It is equipped with two tables and several forms. No
play material was in evidence. This room is also used as a
picture hall on wet evenings. Pictures are shown once weekly
and I understand that the local residents also attend.
Mindoos has now joined the local Cricket Association
and a match is played on each Sunday.
The boys are said to have ample swimming in the creek
flowing through the property. They are practically all well
tanned and showed no signs of sunburn.
The boys recently combined with the Clontarf boys on a
river trip and on another occasion had a day's picnic at New
Norcia.

10. The dairy is progressing and it is anticipated
will be in use shortly. Eighteen cows are now in milk and I
was assured that there is an ample supply of milk and butter.

11. Education: Classrooms were as previously reported;
no change in any respect. Brother Jodoe claims that desks were
ordered in November, but with the present industrial conditions
prevailing his order has not been fulfilled. I pointed out the
urgent necessity for proper school furniture and equipment to be
provided at the earliest possible date in view of the large number of lads of school age. With this he agreed.

12. Health: Generally good. Six boys show signs of ringworm and one lad is reported by Miss Stewart to have bad ears. In the absence of any medical record accompanying these boys the medical aspect is a difficult one and I would suggest that the boys be seen at the earliest possible date by a medical officer.

13. Wages: There are now eight boys not on the school list and therefore regarded as trainees. Although some of the recent arrivals are over 14 years of age Brother McGee has classed them all as school-boys until he has an opportunity to gauge their scholastic ability.

I raised the question of wages for trainees and outlined my opinion on this matter to Brother McGee. However, he disagreed with me for the following reasons:—

1. The cost involved to provide a wage of say 7/6d. to 10/- per week for each boy would be prohibitive.

2. The boys by no means earn this amount plus their keep.

3. Damage caused by them to farm equipment during their training was excessive.

4. Colleges such as Muresk and Narrogin did not pay wages.

I pointed out the differences in respect of these Colleges and Bindoon. However, Brother McGee was opposed to my idea and as the matter is one involving policy, which will also arise in other institutions at a later date, I suggest that this aspect should be taken up with a higher authority.

14. General: I also discussed with Brother McGee the general isolation problem in respect of Bindoon and the necessity for these lads to make as much contact as possible with Australian youths and people, that they may assimilate Australian ideas and conditions. He stated he fully realised the importance of this aspect and hoped that during the ensuing year it would be possible for him to place practically all of the boys in private families for at least portion of their school holidays.

The female staff previously reported is still employed, with the addition of a coloured girl from New Norcia. The general impression I gained in respect of the domestic aspect was that there is not sufficient emphasis on domestic matters, which perhaps could be attributed to shortage of a trained staff.

Nothing further has been arranged in regard to the proposed advent of Sisters.
Matters requiring urgent attention are:—

(1) Provision of suitable furniture and educational facilities.

(2) If the Sisters cannot be obtained immediately, further domestic staff appears necessary.

(3) Provision of lockers in dormitories and general renovation of same.

(4) Provision of tooth-brush and towel racks, etc., in the ablution section.

(5) Medical review of all boys.

(6) Wages for trainees.

22.1.48
RM.H

INSTITUTION OFFICER.