

# THEY ARE ASSIMILATED WHILE AT PLAY

Life is fun — inside . . .

Recent improvements to the building and equipment of the kindergarten conducted by officers of the Department of Immigration at the Migrant Centre, Benalla, Victoria, emphasised the important work which is being done in the interests of migrant children in the Department's various kindergartens in Immigration Centres throughout Australia.

The 38 children attending kindergarten represent Polish, German, Latvian, Yugo-Slav, and Lithuanian nationalities, and their ages vary from three to five years.

**T**HE trained kindergarten teacher, Miss Mary Edmonds, has two assistants to help with the children, who are divided into three groups — those from three to four years attend from 9 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.; those from four to five years are present from 1 p.m. to 3.30 p.m., and others from 7.45 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The children of widows or mothers who are the sole wage earners attend for the full day, but have a luncheon interval during which they join their mothers in the Centre mess. Most of these women are employed in a nearby clothing factory. All other children attend only for a half-day session, either in the morning or afternoon.

When Miss Edmonds takes delivery of her young charges in the morning there has already been planned a comprehensive programme of activities carefully designed to mix education, play, assimilation, and relaxation.

In the two play rooms their interest is held with a variety of specially-selected Pre-School educational play material, such as large building blocks, poster paints with which they produce delightful creations of modern art, clay,

carpentry tools, home corners, fitted out with child-size furniture, dolls prams, miniature brooms, crockery and kitchen utensils, etc.

A piano provides music for rhythmic movement and accompaniment for kindergarten songs, which are sung in English with much enjoyment. Through the medium of stories, songs, nature talks and general conversation, the children readily learn English and so are receiving a valuable preparation for their near future school life. Miss Edmonds states that all are active, alert and well-behaved.

The effect of colours upon child psychology has been carefully studied in planning the environment for these young children. The play-rooms are painted cream, with yellow floral curtains at the window. Small tables and chairs in yellow, green and blue, brighten the room, which, in the cold mornings, is warmed by a stove and electric radiators. The children are given warm milk and fruit during the mornings and afternoons.

A stainless steel sink with hot water laid on, is a convenience for washing up the utensils. A small towel is provided for each child and is hung on a hook, identified with the child by a pictorial symbol.

The kindergarten's playground, when fully developed, will contain a large area of lawn and another of tan bark. A sand pit which has been in use for some time is always well patronised. So are the jumping boards, trestles and swings. The small boys do vigorous work with an improved punching ball and oddments of junk material.

With small watering-cans the children enjoy watering the plants and shrubs which they have planted in the small garden adjoining the kindergarten. In fine weather story groups or other indoor activities are held outside in the playground, under one of the trees.

Among the children are:

Leo Kevalaitis, 4½, Lithuanian born, whose mother works in the local clothing factory, and who is one of the kindergarten's many

enthusiastic gardeners; Jan Boss, 4½-year-old Estonian, who bangs a carpenter's hammer on to a block of wood, both nearly as big as himself; Trena Smidt, 4½, Polish born, who delights in filling the watering cans for the "gardeners" from the kindergarten tap, and Margarita Nickolsky, Polish, four years, and Celina Swist, four years, Russian. The last two like a "double dink" on the kindergarten's tricycle, and Margarita has a special interest in the new pot plants which have been placed in the re-built entrance hall to the kindergarten.

The kindergarten children are particularly robust and healthy. Each quarter they are taken into the medical section of the Centre and are checked over by a visiting doctor from Benalla and, where necessary, advice is conveyed to the parents as to treatment.

So in this charming pre-school Centre, as in other Centres throughout Australia our little new Australians are being given every opportunity to develop healthy bodies, sound minds, kindly behaviour and ability to get on well with others — a sound foundation toward easy assimilation.

The young lady on the right is Margarita Nickolsky from Russia. She is inspecting her cold-water 'paints' before launching out on some satisfying job of work.



. . . or outside . . . when you're at play centre



The top picture shows a general view of the main playing room which is painted cream and has floral curtains at the windows. Bottom picture shows the children using some of the outdoor equipment under supervision.



Amateur "carpenters" at work with hammer and nails in the outdoor playground:—Polish Waslaw Biniek, aged three years, with Jan Boss, four-year-old Estonian.



Young gardeners with their toy watering cans:— Leopold Kevalaitis, four years, Lithuanian; Michaelo Berjancz, four years, Polish, and Bernadetta Scislo, five years, Polish.



They are off to a good start

