

assist women to emigrate to join their husbands.”¹⁷ Two similar examples appear in the Banbury Union records.¹⁸ In 1856 Eliza West, a 19-year old illegitimate orphan from Banbury, was refused assistance to emigrate to Australia, and in 1859 the request from Bloxham for authority to send Elizabeth Needle, the deserted wife of David Needle, and her children under 10, to join him in Canada, was also turned down. The Commissioners’ policy appears to have been (except with convict families) to assist only men, with or without families, at least until after the Poor Law Amendment Act 1850 allowed children under 16 to emigrate unaccompanied by parents – a change designed to allow orphans and street children to be sent abroad by such organisations as Dr Barnardo’s.¹⁹

There seems also to have been a limitation on the assisted emigration of the infirm. A letter from the vicar of Chesterton, Revd Aubrey Charles Price, to the Poor Law Commissioners dated 13 April 1844 described the plight of a girl with an infirmity wishing to emigrate to Australia:²⁰

“Charles King (one of the persons who wishes to emigrate to Australia) has a daughter, aged 18, who from having a complaint in her nose, will not be allowed to go out as a bounty emigrant, *ie* to have a free passage, but Messrs Carter and Bonus [the shipping agents] require twenty pounds for her passage

¹⁷ NRO PL1/5, 1846-50, pp 336, 344.

¹⁸ MH 12 9587, 9588 – see J S W Gibson, ‘Sponsored Emigration of Paupers from the Banbury Union 1834-1860’ (*The Oxfordshire Family Historian*, Oxfordshire Family History Society, vol 2, no 7, Spring 1982) pp 212-3.

¹⁹ Such children went in large numbers but mainly from places like London and other big cities. In a Parliamentary report on the Emigration of Pauper Children to Canada in 1875, the Local Government Inspector wrote “The children placed out in Canada by Miss Macpherson and Miss Rye are of two classes: pauper children who are sent out at the cost of the rates, and children rescued from the streets, ‘waifs and strays’, ‘arabs’, ‘gutter children’, as they appear to be indiscriminately called by those who promote their emigration. Of pauper children sent out at the cost of the rates Miss Macpherson has distributed about 350, Miss Rye about 800. The proportion of ‘arab’ children by Miss Macpherson is very much larger, while the proportion of ‘arab’ children distributed by Miss Rye is considerably smaller. As the children are distributed over the Dominion, from New Brunswick to the remotest settled ‘concessions’ in the West, it was obviously impossible for me to do more within a reasonable time than personally to visit such a number, about 400, in different parts of the Dominion as might fairly represent the average condition of the whole”. (House of Commons paper 8 February 1875, p 4).

²⁰ Quoted in a follow-up article on Sponsored Pauper Emigration by J S W Gibson in *The Oxfordshire Family Historian*, vol 2, no 8, Summer 1982, pp 261-2.