

Foreword

Populations grow; they also grow younger. Social problems change; old restraints go. The city calls; the countryside loses out. The swelling numbers of school-leavers - and of the unschooled - need jobs and "a piece of the action". And as communications improve, expectations rise - in Asia and the Americas, in the Pacific and Europe and Africa.

These things happen faster, in many parts of the world, than the skills and resources required to cope with the problems that they throw up can be marshalled. We need to bend our efforts jointly to the task if we are to acquire swiftly enough the knowledge and understanding and techniques that will help to convert what has been recognised in recent years as a universal and disturbing social phenomenon into what it can be - a source of inspiration and strength on the national and international level.

The youth "problem" differs, of course, in its nature between "developed" and "developing" countries and between countries of differing political systems. But everywhere the root of the problem appears to lie in the understandable dissatisfaction of the rising generation with the established social and economic order. In the developing countries, this dissatisfaction takes on particular overtones because of its close link with the problems faced by the increasing numbers of young people who are emerging from a traditional way of life but who find that the modern economy has not developed sufficiently to receive them and to offer them the opportunities to use their talents creatively and satisfyingly.

In recent years this problem of transition from traditional to modern society, of equipping young people with skills and attitudes and opportunities to make the transference, has been the subject of thought and experimentation in many countries.

The African countries of the Commonwealth have made a remarkable contribution to this process. The object of organising the Commonwealth African Regional Youth Seminar was to facilitate the exchange of some of the experience accumulated among those engaged in this work.

The origins of the seminar lay in a proposal advanced by the British Government at the Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in January 1969. Before that time the Education Research Officer in my Education Division (Mr. A.W. Wood) had undertaken a preliminary study of the organisation and training of young people in the Commonwealth countries of Africa. The proposal before the Heads of Government Meeting was that a series of studies on youth questions be undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The proposal was generally welcomed and the Secretariat was authorised to examine its feasibility. In my view the undoubted success of the seminar reported in the following pages offers firm evidence of the usefulness of a Commonwealth initiative in this field.

The holding of the seminar was made easier by the generosity of three Foundations - The Commonwealth Foundation, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation and the Dulverton Trust. We are most grateful to them.

I should like also to express warmest thanks to the Government of Kenya for allowing the seminar to meet in the impressive capital of their beautiful country.

The Nairobi Seminar was a new departure for the Commonwealth Secretariat. It was in some ways an experiment. The principal members of it, instead of being delegates expressing the official views of their governments, were present and spoke as experts in the field of youth organisation and training in the several African member countries of the Commonwealth. Associated with them were persons with similar experience and knowledge from other Commonwealth countries, as well as consultants whom we invited because of their special knowledge and wide experience of the problems to be discussed, and observers sent by international organisations and other agencies with related interests and terms of reference.

The main purpose was to pool the thinking and experience of these experts with a view to producing a report which we hope will be useful not only to the participants, but to policy makers both governmental and non-governmental.

This report is not a blueprint for youth training in Africa; still less does it seek to outline an ideal policy for youth. It stresses the view that there is room for a multiplicity of ideas on youth problems and training in Africa today, that there can be no single model solution and that original thinking and experimentation must be encouraged and promoted by governmental and non-governmental agencies, national and international, if effective inroads are to be made into the enormity of the training need among young people out of school - and often unemployed or under-employed - in the developing countries of Africa.

The views recorded in this report are of course those of the experts who attended the seminar, and not necessarily those either of the Governments of nations in Africa and other parts of the Commonwealth from which they came, or of the Commonwealth Secretariat. But I believe that the report contains much that will be of interest and service not only to the countries of Africa, but also to other countries both within and outside the Commonwealth.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arnold Smith', with a stylized, cursive script.

Arnold Smith
Commonwealth Secretary-General

Marlborough House,
Pall Mall,
London, S.W.1.