

FOREWORD

by the Commonwealth Secretary-General

Brilliant sunshine, a cloudless blue sky, dazzling white beaches, an iridescent sea, palm trees gently swaying in the breeze, lush vegetation and fragrant blossom, the pulsating rhythm of the steel band - - - - -

This is the Caribbean - at least, as seen through the polaroids of the tourist. Small wonder that he feels mildly envious of the inhabitants of these islands in the sun.

Perceived through unshaded eyes, however, the illusion changes and the sky is no longer cloudless. To Caribbean leaders and their people, the natural beauty of the environment is also an incongruous backdrop for the social ferment of which they are part and parcel.

Here among a group of newly emerging nations may be found an amalgam of most of the known forms of the youth problem. The educated drop-out jostles against the frustrated primary school leaver, the drug scene grows ominously, traditional authority is challenged and condemned and existing social attitudes are called sharply into question. The search for identity is vigorous and a place in the sun is no longer enough.

From the Caribbean cauldron many other developing countries of the Commonwealth may not only gauge the range of problems which they are likely to encounter, as their educational systems approach the degree of sophistication of those in the West Indies, but they may also recognise promising lines for their solution. The enterprise of young people in pioneering the development of the Guyanese interior, in serving their communities as volunteers, in acquiring new skills in youth

camps, in operating co-operatives, and small scale businesses etc., point the way and reflect the capabilities and resilience of youth.

Political emergence has brought in its wake a dramatic change in the attitudes and outlook of young people. They want to serve, and they demand channels to make service possible.

The Caribbean region shares with the rest of the developing world the loss from the rural areas of the more ambitious and able young people who join, in increasing numbers, the drift into towns. Some of the islands suffer even more from the emigration of the best qualified. Of 784 nurses trained in Jamaica between 1962 and 1966, 729 migrated to other countries. It would be all too simple to argue that the "pull factors" - better salaries, higher standards of living etc., are altogether responsible. Surely, there are also "push factors" such as lack of encouragement, disincentives, and disillusion.

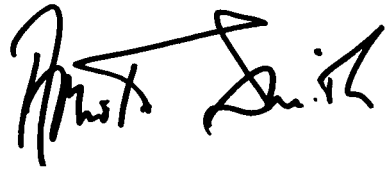
The disillusion can best be dispelled by the direct involvement of young people in the development process, by the delegation of real responsibility for part of the nation building to those who will have to live in such nations until well into the 21st century. Half the population of the Caribbean is under the age of 25; this is too high a proportion to be left out of the consultations relating to decisions about their future. Confidence in the young and involvement of the young are the keys to peaceful progress.

Goodwill on the part of the existing community leaders will evoke the co-operation of those who will inherit the world now being fashioned. The alternative to co-operation and mutual trust is an unhappy prospect. The problem is with us now; decisions must be made without delay. Don Fabun's story of the Shafter cow in The Dynamics of Change carries the moral for our times and should help to instil in us all a due sense of urgency:

"At exactly 5:13 a.m., the 18th of April, 1906, a cow was standing somewhere between the main barn and the milking shed on the old Shafter Ranch in California, minding her own business. Suddenly, the earth shook, the skies trembled, and when it was all over, there was nothing showing of the cow above ground but a bit of her tail sticking up. For the student of change, the Shafter cow is a sort of symbol of our times.

She stood quietly enough, thinking such gentle thoughts as cows are likely to have, while huge forces outside her ken built up all around her and, within a minute, discharged all at once in a great movement that changed the configuration of the earth and destroyed a city and swallowed her up . . . If we do not learn to understand and guide the great forces of change at work in the world today, we may find ourselves like the Shafter cow, swallowed up by vast upheavals in our way of life - quite early some morning."

In the Caribbean people of many different races and creeds are labouring to build nations, as their national blazons testify. Out of many, Jamaica seeks to mould one people; Trinidadians aspire together and achieve together; in Barbados they progress on the basis of pride and industry, while Guyana moves forward as one people, one nation with one destiny. In all of this youth must and will play its part.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amos Lovell". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the middle of the name.