

CHAPTER 3

Youth in Action

Responsibility and co-ordination

88. In the established system of provision for youth, governments, voluntary agencies, commerce and industry have all been involved in different ways. The missing element is the young people themselves. So often youth is "provided for". In the present times, with the growing sense of independence on the part of young people, with the spread internationally of concepts of participation and resistance to direction by authority, it was regarded as of the greatest importance that youth activities, while still supported by the traditional interests, should be as far as possible under the direction of young people themselves, with young people being involved in the planning and in the execution of programmes. This should apply equally to governmental and voluntary projects, although it was recognised that government structures make it more difficult to bring young people into direct contact with the point where decisions are made. Nevertheless, there are hopeful indications in various countries in the region that young people with first-hand experience of these patterns of activities which are likely to stimulate the interest of youth could become involved in the development of governmental strategy.

89. Governments should be the main source of funds for youth work, although this has not yet been accepted throughout the region. In addition, governments have the responsibility for determining the broad lines within which all youth activities should operate. They should recognise the need for the maximum degree of diversification so that specific projects, whether governmental or other, may be designed to meet the needs of particular groups or particular local situations. Equally, machinery is necessary to enable individual programmes or organisations to influence the development of national policy. In this connection, a welcome trend is the

emergence within various countries of National Youth Councils which communicate the views of the non-governmental sector of youth activities. It was observed that such agencies often involve mainly the conventional youth organisations and do not extend across the whole range of youth work to include development-oriented activities. National Youth Councils should be broadened in this way if they are to reflect accurately the whole youth situation in individual countries. With official representation they could become the focal-point for comprehensive national policy-making and effective collaboration among all those concerned in the youth field.

90. There was a general feeling that effective co-ordination has been lacking in many respects in the past and that a broadly representative body such as was envisaged would lead to a general enrichment of programmes. It could both promote better exchange of ideas at the national level and also improve international co-operation and exchange by providing an effective channel for co-operation in the whole field of youth activities. The importance of such an inter-agency structure suggested that its head should be a political figure of the highest level. Such an appointment would facilitate local co-ordination and also demonstrate the high priority which Caribbean countries are prepared to accord to youth activities.

Participation

91. The current movement towards involving youth people in the processes of decision-making is as necessary in the Caribbean as elsewhere. In the Caribbean there has traditionally been a deep-seated reverence for seniority in society, measured in terms of years. Positive action to achieve the greater participation of young people in decision-making is more urgent in Caribbean society than in some other regions, where changes in recent years have brought about the accelerated advancement of comparatively young people to positions of high authority.

92. In the past, well-intentioned people interested in youth matters have often launched programmes designed to mould young people in accordance with what the older generation believed to be "good" and "proper" practice. The young had rarely questioned the right of their elders to take these kinds of decisions and voluntary youth work along traditional lines had been well supported. The new spirit of questioning which had arisen in recent years had led to a rejection by many young people of traditional

youth organisations as being inappropriate to their needs because the shaping of policy in these organisations took little account of their opinions. As a consequence, both in long-established youth programmes and in the more recent ventures such as youth camps there is increasing acceptance by adults of the need for participation by young people. This is apparent, for example, in the Trinidad youth camps where the administration of the disciplinary code rests almost entirely with a committee of the campers. Other recent developments in the region which indicate a growing willingness on the part of the adult generations to recognise the need for the involvement of youth in all aspects of society are the appointment of members of Youth Organisations to important National Councils including in some instances, the Senate. On a wider scale, there is growing throughout the region a vigorous debate on the desirability of lowering the voting age to eighteen years, a development which, the seminar felt, would indicate the willingness of governments to involve young people at the political level.

93. Whilst this was regarded as an important and progressive measure, there was a feeling that political gestures alone were not sufficient. The responsibility of governments in the Caribbean towards their young people should include also the support for programmes enabling young people to express their concern for their communities positively through personal involvement. Government training programmes, whether in formal vocational training establishments or youth camps, are crippled in their effectiveness by the limited numbers of young people whom they can accept. At both extremes of the nations' young people, on the one hand the unattached, the young people with multiple disadvantages, and on the other the university students, no means exist whereby they can convert into action their urge to participate. The seminar saw the need for co-ordinated national programmes involving youth in both the planning and execution of action projects, thus making participation a reality.

Leadership training

94. Imaginative and progressive leadership is essential if attractive programmes are to be devised on a wide enough scale to affect the large numbers of unattached, unemployed young people in the region. Two types of leadership were identified. First, there are those people who are professionally engaged in work with young people either through governmental agencies or voluntary organisations. Secondly, there are the young people themselves. An essential function of youth programmes is to encourage

young people to offer themselves as leaders and provide opportunities for them. The development of such leaders is vital to the future social and economic progress of the region.

95. Existing leaders should appreciate the need to relate youth activities to development both in the practical operation of programmes and their broader educational objectives. The attitudes of such leaders are important. It is vital to avoid bureaucratic attitudes and the conventional official attitude of administering programmes without personal commitment. If programmes are to succeed, the leadership must be able to arouse enthusiasm and commitment in young people, and this implies that these attitudes are shared by the leaders and administrators. This has important implications for official policy about the staffing of agencies working with young people.

96. Participation in leadership must mean more to young people than a desire to lay hands on the symbols of adult authority. Ultimately, there must develop a greater appreciation in Caribbean society of what people can do for themselves and a decreasing tendency to look to government for action, particularly in the development field and activities affecting the community. Such attitudes can be fostered by youth programmes and should be a conscious objective of such programmes.

The formal school

97. Existing curricula, methods of teaching and school organisation were reviewed by the seminar. Present educational systems prepare young people to take up employment in the wage-earning sectors of commerce, industry and government, and parental aspirations are strongly focussed in this direction. As a result, young people undergoing formal schooling, particularly those in secondary and higher education, tend to be insensitive to the needs of the less fortunate members of the community who are unable to aspire to such employment. There is a corresponding unawareness of the potential contribution of the formal school towards general development programmes and in particular programmes for out of school youth. The existing system fails to prepare those young people who do not succeed in reaching the higher levels to be self-reliant and make the most of opportunities for self-employment.

98. The seminar believed that the needs of young people, particularly those out of school, for skills training and for broadened

social experience can best be met through plans for the comprehensive development and improvement of whole communities. The resource that the school represents in terms of manpower and in material, especially in less developed rural areas, should be put to the service of the whole community whenever it is not required for conventional educational purposes, particularly during school holidays and in the evenings. For the school to extend its role in this way the curricula at primary and secondary levels need modification so as to make the maximum use of the child's immediate environment. This applies particularly to elementary science but also to many other subjects, such as social studies. The curriculum should also include for all pupils acquaintance with various practical skills, tools and materials. There might also be included in the curricula of the upper levels of primary schools and secondary schools an opportunity for direct community service. This might take the form of assistance with the construction and maintenance of community buildings, the development of improved tools, equipment, farming techniques, crops or help with overstrained social services, for example by helping in hospitals and dispensaries. The school can thus become the focal point for community activities, including youth activities. In order to ensure continuing working links between school and community, the possibility should be explored of training teacher-social workers. These would have a part-time teaching load in school, possibly in areas of the curriculum related to community work and the understanding of society, together with a part-time responsibility for work among young people and adults out of school, using the school as a base from which to operate. Experience in certain Educational Priority Areas in Britain with this type of experiment is especially relevant, and information on their future development could usefully be disseminated throughout the Caribbean region.

99. The concept of the school serving the educational needs of whole communities, children, young people and adults, implies changes in attitudes on the part of head teachers, assistant teachers and teacher trainers, and the consequent need for far-reaching changes in the pre-service and in-service training of teachers. For teachers already in service, re-training programmes could promote and stimulate support for the revised role of the school in the community. For future teachers, the curricula of teacher training colleges and the organisation of pre-service training should be reconstructed to put over the idea of the school as a centre for community development as well as a building in which formal teaching takes place. School teachers and others

engaged in education for social and economic development, such as agricultural extension workers, co-operative and community development workers, might discover mutual benefits from sharing in a common training institution. Njala University College in Sierra Leone, for example, has successfully established training courses for school teachers, agricultural extension workers and home economics diploma holders within the same institution. The lack of co-ordination often existing between these different groups might be minimised if mutual understanding was developed at the initial training stage.

100. Possible difficulties were also foreseen in helping young people already in school towards a revised concept of the purposes and activities of the school. This re-orientation might be achieved through the inclusion in the curriculum of studies relating to the social and economic background of the particular society, through seminars involving students and out-of-school youth, work camps, joint work projects and community service activities generally.

101. It was stressed that parents often share with their children the view of the school as an escape route from a way of life which they themselves would like to reject. Older people, particularly in rural communities, must be made aware of the development potential of their societies, particularly the possibilities of self-help projects and the contribution which they and their families might make. The revised concept of the school and its role could help to this end.

102. When attempting to involve adults in the school, it is necessary to look beyond the traditional Parent-Teachers Associations. These have often been controlled by teachers, directing the interest of parents towards the provision and improvement of school amenities, largely through fund-raising. What was now felt to be necessary is a genuine partnership between teachers, parents and the young people in school, so involving the community as a whole.

Young people in secondary schools and universities

103. The seminar was generally agreed on the need to involve young people from secondary schools and universities in practical schemes of community service as their contribution to national development and the development of their immediate communities. A frequent criticism is that these young people ignore the needs of the under-privileged masses.

104. Various ways were suggested whereby young people from the educationally privileged section of the community can become involved in community service programmes. This type of activity could take various forms, depending on the nature and interests of the particular group. Practical activities could aim at improving the immediate living and working environment. In Dominica and Guyana, projects concerned with painting and maintaining hospitals have proved successful. Building roads in remote areas has also been tried. These activities call for a substantial physical effort, often imply rugged living conditions and certainly serve to promote a different image of the jobs that young people in secondary and tertiary education are prepared to tackle. There is also a greater need for groups with declared humanitarian objectives, for example, Junior Red Cross, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, to become involved directly in work with branches of the social services. Hospitals are often short of staff, and hospital managements should be encouraged to examine the possibilities of using young volunteers. The training programmes of specific organisations might be related to such special situations. Drama or cultural groups can contribute both by fund raising through public performances and by performing in hospitals or homes for the aged. The underlying requirement is that programmes should be as wide-ranging and diversified as possible, seeking to provide the most extensive range of possibilities for the worthwhile involvement of young people in the problems of their communities.

Special role of national youth services and youth camps

105. Programmes now operating in many developing countries, including several countries in the Caribbean, provide full-time residential training for varying periods from one to two years. Provision for girls is increasing. The camps in which this type of training largely takes place are mostly situated in rural areas, involve substantial numbers of rural youth in their programmes and have a major agricultural and rural vocational element in their programmes.

106. The particular value of this type of provision lies in its combining of training in a variety of vocational skills with general education and activities designed to encourage social responsibility and the development of the individual personality. Since the young people attending the camps are mainly from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, a twofold purpose is served. First, the young people are helped to become more

mature and socially acceptable individuals, with a greater pride in themselves and understanding of the problems of their country and their community. Secondly, they are given skills which may be either directly applicable in employment, for example in farming or in various service occupations, or the foundation for a thorough craft training to recognised standards. In certain instances, however, the camps have sought to provide a complete skills training, although, because of the need to provide suitably qualified instructors, training facilities, equipment and materials and simulated working environment, this type of experiment has never been entirely successful. In consequence, when full skills training courses to recognised levels are attempted, the additional costs involved may compare unfavourably with other forms of training such as trade centres and industrial wings of training institutions.

107. Youth camps, as they have operated within the Caribbean region, have complemented rather than competed with the work of more conventional forms of trade training and have reached young people who might otherwise have been unaffected by out-of-school educational activity. They have also contained a substantial element of remedial social work within their programmes.

108. Such programmes are largely phenomena of the 1960s, although the Jamaica camps originated in the previous decade and have had an influence in many regions of the Commonwealth and beyond. The constitutional affinities between the Jamaican camps and the Kenya National Youth Service are particularly noticeable. Because these organisations were formed quite recently, there is little real information on how successful in the long term they are as agencies for changing the attitudes of young people and guiding them towards participation in national development. A particular need, and one which might be supplied more easily, is a clear assessment of how successful such programmes are in fitting young people into employment, or how successful they are in turning out young people with the skills and desire to improve upon traditional patterns of farming. The Social Science departments of the University of the West Indies could provide a valuable service by evaluating the impact of these programmes, at least in the short term, on the young people who have participated in them.

109. The customary doubts over the high cost of youth camps and national youth services were expressed. The Caribbean establishments undertake considerably less in the way of productive work

by the trainees themselves than do similar agencies in Africa. In various African countries such work takes the form of direct involvement by trainees in the building and operating of camps, agricultural work contributing to food needs and revenue through sales, and paid contract work in various technical fields for government or private industry. It was suggested that in the Caribbean region youth camps have been dominated by the philosophy of social work, that is, they are primarily remedial organizations. In the present situation in the Caribbean it was felt that the youth camps should concentrate more on development requirements and the practical contribution which the camps and the campers might make to development. The introduction of more productive activities might also assist to some extent in reducing the high costs of full residential establishment. Because of their costs, youth camps can be seen as only one component in the overall provision for young people in the region, affecting a relatively small minority of young people out of school. The camps must, therefore, be complemented by less intensive and less costly approaches to youth training.

110. Youth camps in the rural setting can do much to familiarise young people with new techniques and new crops whilst at the same time working to overcome their prejudice against agriculture. The Jamaican youth camps have many pioneering achievements to their credit in this respect. No matter how effective the agricultural training operation, or how systematic the attempted re-orientation of attitudes, it cannot be expected that large numbers of the young people produced by the camps will turn to farming and produce the changes in farming practices expected of them, if the present restrictive system prevailing in most rural areas in the Caribbean remains. Rural training related to all-round rural development must be effected before any substantial achievements can be realised.

111. A cause of concern about youth camps in the rural areas is the lack of a working and social relationship between the camps and the surrounding rural community. Whenever possible camp facilities should be made available to adults also, especially in areas where recreational and social facilities are limited and where there are few other sources of new agricultural ideas. The camps should primarily serve young people but should also see themselves as part of an overall national provision for community needs. They should, therefore, seek as far as possible to serve the community also.

Evaluation and youth programmes

112. Programmes for young people have often been launched hastily, without a clear understanding of their objectives and without any assessment of whether they are satisfying real needs of young people. It has not always been established whether the particular approach selected is an acceptable use of resources in terms of costs, whether it is primarily a remedial exercise aimed at keeping young people off the streets, or whether it has a preventive purpose aimed at attacking the root cause of discontent among young people by promoting development activity.

113. Systematic evaluation is essential if these doubts are to be resolved and a rational basis established for a valid strategy for programmes for young people in the particular social context and within the limits of the resources available. Such evaluation, if properly executed, requires a range of specialised professional skills in the social sciences, including the use of techniques of measurement which are objective and free from personal and political pressures. Various possibilities were examined for organising this type of service. The seminar considered the example of the National Council for Educational Research and Training in India. This is an autonomous body, organised on an academic basis but enjoying financial support from government, which provides specialised services including the objective evaluation of programmes of various Ministries. Such an organisation is only feasible when a country has a wide variety of programmes in operation and when there are adequate reserves of professional skills. In many countries it is necessary to look to universities to provide such services. This affords an excellent opportunity for University Social Science faculties to provide a valuable service to the community and, in so doing, acquaint students directly with real social problems during their normal course work. This possibility was regarded as particularly appropriate in the Caribbean region where the university covers most countries and has a recognised regional status.

114. Evaluation has become a province of the international expert in recent years, a fact which can result in heavily subjective reports, drawing very often on experience in other situations inappropriate to the very distinctive situation of the Caribbean region. Doubts were expressed about the value of short term assignments by experts, although comparative experience could provide useful assistance to the operation of the programmes.

115. Various methods were considered for the carrying out of long-term evaluation. Success can be judged only against declared objectives, when programmes are planned. A statement of objectives should include social as well as economic factors, despite the difficulties of listing the former. In estimating the overall impact of youth programmes, social and political factors must be taken into account. This requires a special understanding of the character of a particular society and consequently presents serious difficulties to internationally recruited evaluators. Local personnel, sensitive to local social and political factors, should be associated closely with any evaluation undertaken by an outsider.

116. An essential preliminary procedure often overlooked is the baseline survey, which establishes the necessary initial data against which the changes brought about by a particular programme are to be measured. Evaluation is often begun some time after programmes have been initiated. If no baseline survey has been made the ultimate task of evaluation is much more difficult. Such essential preparatory work affords a valuable opportunity for university students to make available their special talents and training for the service of the community. The further development of evaluation procedures, involving the use of sampling techniques over broad areas of the community, also provides a valuable opportunity for co-operation with commerce and industry, since these frequently have well developed market research and data-processing facilities useful to the planning and evaluation of youth programmes.

117. Youth programmes can benefit from the practice in commerce and industry of monitoring, or continuous assessment, so that shortfalls or flaws in the operation of programmes can be revealed and appropriate modifications be made as the activity goes on. In many respects, continuous assessment of this nature is of more practical value than evaluation carried out over a lengthy time-span, the results of which may be long delayed.