

TRAINING AND SERVICE:
YOUNG PEOPLE AS A NATURAL RESOURCE

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In so far as my work deals with volunteers, what I am going to say may seem irrelevant to those who are tormented with the problems of involving the unemployed in work. Indeed, during conversations with the youngsters of Mt. St. George Youth Camp in Tobago and at Chaguaramas Camp in Trinidad, it became clear that many simply could not conceive why one should be training and involving young people in activities that did not lead immediately and directly to permanent employment.

In so far as my work is to discover new roles for young people and to develop a labour-intensive approach, then there may be interests that we have in common.

We cannot be working on behalf of the dispossessed, the disadvantaged, the deprived, without simultaneously making parallel efforts to involve the privileged, the better educated, the more fortunate young. This requires different motivation and changes in attitude.

Aims and end-products

I have observed in several very different operations that when labour-intensity becomes the principal aim, the nature of the product itself changes. This was clearly evident in the case of, for example, an institution for mentally handicapped adolescents in London where it is the concern of the staff that, as part of their training, these young people should be making things with a view to selling them. If it has ever been your lot to have association with such schemes, you will know how difficult it is to find things which such young people can make, and which are also marketable. But ultimately the staff came up with an idea - a kind of toy, of plastic or sorbo-rubber, made in the shape of a doll, which children might play with in the bath. Great was the delight of the staff when they secured an order for it from one of the largest chain stores. Then there came the dreadful day when a letter arrived from the headquarters of the firm saying that the

buttons, those little sorbo-rubber buttons, were not always in the direct perpendicular, and unless this could be rectified, regretfully they would have to cease their orders.

When I visited the institution two months later, it was to find that they were still producing these toys and the order had been increased. But now it was the staff who were making them, totally destroying the whole object of the exercise. They had made productivity and the cash gain their priority. Six months later, however, as a result of some suggestions which I made, they switched to another line and now once again the young people were doing the manufacturing. What every child, what every adolescent was making was a picture. Each picture was individual, each reflecting something in the child. There is now a sale for these products, particularly when it is known from what background they come. (Indeed, one is not being cynical, but they resemble some of the most avant garde pictures which can be bought in art galleries). Happiness is now abounding on all fronts.

I repeat: The nature of the operation changes subtly when in fact it is the utilisation of people which becomes your priority and not just productivity.

There is an institution for severely physically handicapped adolescents and young men on the south coast of England, in a very comfortable seaside resort. We were asked if we could provide volunteers who would help in the nursing and general care of these people. We provided rather a mixed bag - two unemployed lads who felt that although they were unemployed, they might as well do something worthwhile until a job turned up, and two other young men, perhaps from a rather different social background, who were police cadets. In these institutions the inmates were put to bed at six p.m. Can you imagine what it would be like, at the age of nineteen and with a mind of your own, on a summer evening on the south coast of Britain, to have to be put to bed at six o'clock as though you were a child of five or six? Can you imagine the indignity and the boredom?

"But you do understand, don't you, Mr. Dickson, that staff are hard to come by, and as funds aren't limitless, we can't employ two shifts? So it is quite natural and proper that our staff should go off duty at six o'clock. There is always a night duty person, if a boy rings the bell. And of course, they can always listen to the radio." That was the official explanation.

The young people we provided in substitution for the professional male-nurses did not have their homes locally; they were unmarried and therefore had nothing whatever to do with their leisure time after six p.m. What more natural, then, that they should stay on in the evenings, engaging in every imaginable kind of activity to amuse themselves and the inmates? When I arrived in the fourth month, I found that this institution, where previously the inmates were put to bed at six, was now regarded as the gayest resort in town, where secondary school sixth formers, returning to their homes after a visit to the cinema, would drop in to talk with the staff and inmates or join in a sing-song. Towards eleven, the staff would say, 'Let's pack it in,' tuck the inmates up in bed and put the lights out. The shift from the use of professionals to what was a labour-intensive utilization of young volunteers had totally altered the concept of care in that institution and converted it into something dynamic.

My visit had been towards the end of April, and I was told of an almost shocking incident which had occurred on the first of the month. The Superintendent had come on duty at nine o'clock in the morning and the place was deserted, not an echo; it was rather like the mystery of the 'Marie Celeste' - where had they all gone? The answer was quite simple. Since five a.m. that morning, with the enchanted participation of these crippled youngsters, our four volunteers had been packing them one above the other in the attic so as to be able to greet the Superintendent, after the first ten minutes of his amazement and concern, with 'April Fool!'

Do these examples seem to you rather remote from the West Indies or rather juvenile? Then let me share with you what was for me a profound experience at the recent conference organised by the CIBA Foundation in Istanbul. I was rather an intruder as the only non-medical person present. The problem confronting the delegates was how to deliver medical care to the millions upon millions in the rural areas of the Third World. Although a relatively large part of the medical budget is spent on the training of doctors, when they emerge after seven years' training, their one determination is not to serve in a rural area. Indeed, even a post in a provincial town may not satisfy them. It's the capital or nothing, and if pressures are placed on them, they know that they can sell their skills overseas in the United States or elsewhere. What is the answer to this problem? Increasing the number of doctors in training does not lead to greater medical care reaching the rural masses.

Deeply fascinating was the description given by a British doctor who had just returned after fifteen years in China, the first ten years having been spent at one of the leading teaching hospitals in Peking. Five years ago came an appeal from Chairman Mao for doctors to volunteer to run training courses in the provinces in winter. (Very special significance lay in the last two words - 'in winter' - as you will see in a moment). Their function was to train peasant-doctors. A breaking-point had been reached as it was realised that to rely on the conventional, traditional method of producing doctors meant that medical care was not going to reach millions within this century. Each Commune was asked to put forward the name of one young man who they felt would be capable of absorbing whatever training he was given, and from whom they in turn would be prepared to accept such care, advice and treatment that ultimately he might be able to give to them.

The first task, then, of the doctors who had volunteered was the extremely intricate one of how to boil down and concentrate a training which they had taken seven years to absorb into something that could be communicated in one winter, and absorbed by a person who in China would be called a 1500 character person, able to identify and understand 1500 Chinese characters. This training had to be completed in one winter, because they remained essentially peasants; these peasant-doctors were not available in the summer since they were bringing in their harvest.

Simultaneously, whilst one team undertook this extremely intricate operation, another team was examining and reaching agreement upon what were the six most common diseases to which the Chinese peasant in those areas was prone, and still another team was deciding on one or two relatively fool-proof methods by which these peasant-doctors could recognize the symptoms.

This was the emergence of the peasant-doctor. Of course the ultimate product - the kind of care he could give - was infinitely inferior to that which a trained doctor could give. But when the choice lay between having some care and having none at all, it was obviously better to have some. (Incidentally, spot checks by qualified doctors ascertained an 85% success rate in the diagnosis). What are the implications of this? Surely one implication is that now there are thousands of young men, who in other circumstances would have been only peasants, who today feel a double significance in their lives. And isn't that one important implication of all our work here - to give significant

purpose and meaning to young people living at a very humble socio-economic level?

I remember, when it came to question time at the conference in Istanbul, one of the questions was: "Dr. Horne, what was the motivation for these highly intelligent and experienced doctors of yours, serving at Peking's premier hospital, giving up their comfort to work in improvised lecture-rooms in village barns, in the cold of a Chinese winter?" Quick as lightning and with passionate conviction came the answer: "The approbation of their fellow-citizens, and their conviction that this was the right thing to do."

'Different' need not mean 'worse'

I repeat, when utilisation of people becomes the priority, there is a change in the end product. But I would like to suggest that the change is not necessarily for the worse - it is not necessarily an inferior product.

A "K.A." is a Kidney Assistant, and if you haven't got them in your country now, I prophesy that within ten years they will be there. They are the new human phenomenon which has been evolved to deal with this new, highly intricate piece of machinery, the kidney machine, on which many people may depend for their lives. What is a Kidney Assistant? Visiting a London hospital, I was told by the Matron: "One is coming now down the ward towards you." It was a sister, a hospital sister, but where normally there would be a kind of watch hanging from her uniform, there was a screwdriver. I leave it to you to imagine, even in Britain, in a great hospital, how difficult it is going to be to turn out this polymath, trained not only in the science of medicine, but also in the skills of engineering and combining the two.

Since, even in London, nurses with a knowledge of nuts and bolts are hard to come by, an idea occurred to me. Why should not a youngster at a technical college or an engineering apprentice from a local firm, still in training, be attached for a number of months to that hospital to contribute his engineering skills? In conjunction with the nurses in medical training, could the combination provide the required answer until such time as the College of Nurses has re-tooled to produce the combined genius? Would you be altogether surprised if I told you that the result of the marrying of the two skills was to give young apprentices a sense of personal care? I repeat: when the utilisation of people becomes the aim, when the labour intensive

approach is adopted, the end-product, though it may be different, need not necessarily be inferior.

About three years ago, we approached a hospital in Sussex with a suggestion that a group of local volunteers should construct a swimming pool. What was needed in the first place was a contractor who would agree to make use of untrained and unqualified young workers alongside his own experienced labour force. A contractor was found to give us this undertaking, and my organisation's particular contribution was to find a full-time volunteer who, for four to six months, would act as foreman of the volunteers, co-ordinating the efforts of school-children students, scouts and police cadets.

The first three such volunteer-foremen to be provided had a college background, but the last came from industry - an apprentice with an extremely humble academic background. In his final report was enshrined the truth, so blindingly obvious that it had been obscured from all of us. He asked why, in fact, the scheme had failed. Despite his promises, the contractor had discovered that if he were to follow the architect's plan, it simply was not possible for him to wait for groups of young volunteers to turn up. The cement had to be made, mixed and used at that very minute, and this meant employing his own labourers. The design of the roofing did not allow for the use of the untrained. The only tasks allotted to the volunteers, therefore, were the more menial ones of carrying water and sand.

Then followed this truth. Had the architect been told in the first place that one of the objects of this operation was to enable young people in the neighbourhood to feel that they had contributed to the building, he could undoubtedly have come up with a plan that would aesthetically have been no less agreeable and functionally no less effective. Yes, it might have taken two years to build instead of one year. It might not have had some of the elaborate decorations that the result had, but it would have been just as effective and agreeable.

Apply that to other situations. If effective use is to be made of the relatively unqualified and inexperienced, this fact must be considered in the original design. Simply to adapt an article normally produced by the highly skilled or by mechanical processes will lead to unhappy results.

Service on-the-job

What is the new dynamic in service to the community? I believe it to be this. Service is no longer something that begins at 4.00 p.m. It is no longer something which you relegate to the weekend or to a vacation; or, if you are a married woman, to the time when the children have grown up; or, if you are an adult man, to when you have retired. This is, indeed, the concept of voluntary service which we have had until virtually yesterday. It was something you engaged in after you had made base, after you had reached the shore when your own personal security and aspirations had been achieved. Seldom was it part of that struggle. But today, service is coming to be seen as emerging from the job itself. Helping is too vital to be regarded as a hobby.

In London S.E.1. the postmen have been saying to the Welfare Department responsible for the care of the very old and infirm: "Can we help you? Of course, we are not trained social workers; our headquarters are not at the Town Hall; we are just postmen. But we knock on every door. We should like to acquaint you with the situations of human need that come to our notice in the course of our rounds." They have been followed by the milkmen, saying: "We don't even have to knock on doors; even the way the milk bottles are put out speaks a certain message to us." In the City of Leeds they have been followed by the men who enter houses to read gas meters and electricity meters. Suddenly not only is the technical out-reach of these Welfare Departments gigantically expanded, but men in relatively humble ranks of public utilities discover that potentially they are in the front ranks of social workers. Observe that this is not something that the milkmen or postmen do after 5.00 p.m., when the round is finished, nor something they offer to do at the weekend; it is a service that they are rendering because it emerges fundamentally from the job they are doing, through a re-interpretation of that job.

At Ankara in Turkey, medical students at the Hacettepe School of Medicine are allocated, in their first week of study, responsibility for the health of a Turkish family in a slum area. Manifestly, if a wife is going to have a baby within ten days, a medical student in his first week is not expected to deal with it alone; he will have behind him the whole Faculty of Medicine to give professional support. The point is that responsibility is not assigned to that young man on presentation of his degree. Responsibility, and practice in exercising it, is something which

is built into the course from the very first day.

On the east coast of Britain, at Yarmouth, it suddenly came to the ears of a group of industrial apprentices that there was a man in danger of losing his job in a factory through a blood deficiency, which caused the blood in his fingers to grow so cold that he couldn't operate them. They came up with the answer - battery-operated, transistorized gloves, devised as an essential part of their technical training as apprentices. They undertook this not as something separate, but as an essential part of their training through an interpretation of the role that their skills could play in a social setting.

Training by doing

In the days when I served in other parts of the world, Trinidad did not mean steelbands, or even calypsos. Trinidad meant the famous Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture. I know that today it has a highly specialized role but elsewhere in the Caribbean, the Eastern Caribbean certainly, agricultural officers are presumably being trained. What might one hope for? Perhaps, as an integral part of their training, these young agricultural officers-to-be could share life with the youngsters in the Youth Camps for a period, understanding that their future jobs would be 30% the imparting of technical skills, and possibly 70% the motivational challenge of involving in farming young people who, in fact, are not attracted to it. What would the impact of having such students working alongside and sharing their conditions for a while be on the youngsters in the Youth Camps? What would the training impact of such experience be on these students? Could it be other than positive?

If training and doing are inseparable, if giving and learning are in fact combined - as today in modern French, the word for 'guests' and 'hosts' is interchangeable - then what are the organisational implications? It might mean a sharing of the responsibility for the administration and running of some youth centres and camps. Of all the camps I have seen in my life, those I recall most vividly were situated in the wooded hills of California. Visiting Camp Scott and Camp Scudder, some 25 miles from Los Angeles, on one of those marvellous sunny mornings in mid-December, I discovered there young people whose morale was higher than in any of the new Peace Corps training centres that were being established in that first bright dawning of the Peace Corps in 1961, and it was all the more remarkable, seeing that there was not a single youngster there

of his own free will. They were, in fact, camps for young offenders.

Morale shone as brightly as the reflected sunlight from their steel helmets, because ninety per cent of the training was directed to involving them in the preservation of the forests of Southern California from the ever-present danger of fire. Fire wasn't just a hazard that might illumine the experience of a boy once during his period in these camps. One youngster told me he had been to twenty-three fires. There were the watch towers, there was the duty patrol standing by, able to leap within seconds into one of the trucks, whose engine was kept warm. They felt that they were on active service for the State of California. It was not surprising to learn from the Director that there had been no instance, in his five years' tenure of office, of any boy having flinched in the face of forest fire, or, perhaps still more surprising, having made good use of the resulting confusion to effect his escape. Among the three elements in that camp - the Negro youngsters, the Whites, (know colloquially as the Anglos) and those of Catholic, Spanish-speaking origin (known as the Mexicos) - the intensity of friendship was tragically uncharacteristic of ordinary America. Really, this was William James' "Moral Equivalent of War". But in the context of which I am speaking, the significant thing was that the responsibility for these camps was one shared between the Department responsible for the preservation of forests and the Probation Authorities in Los Angeles County. And it was the knowledge, quite apart from the inherent drama, that what they were doing would have had to have been done, if they hadn't been there, by men paid for the purpose, that gave the boys added significance. Would greater meaning be given to all Youth Camps if they were jointly responsible to a Department that stood in the boys' eyes for a recognised national purpose?

Problem solving in training

I have been wondering if we are making sufficient provision for problem solving. From time to time we send our seventeen and eighteen year olds to the London Hospital, which is about a thousand yards from my office, and there awaiting them are twenty wheel-chairs, by arrangement with the hospital authorities. Our young people are told to return to our office in these wheel-chairs, and each is given a separate assignment. One is to get a book out of the library, another is to phone us from a public call-box, another to use a public lavatory, another to visit the cinema, yet another one to return by the London

Underground. They come back, having made the thousand yards journey, after about two hours, either speechless with excitement or incoherent with indignation at the experiences they have undergone. We know, having done this several times, that only one is likely to succeed - the one who endeavours to make the journey by London Underground from Whitechapel to Aldgate East. This is because you cannot get your hand inside a telephone box and ring if you are in a wheel-chair. You cannot get your wheel-chair up the steps into the Public Library. If you were to be so rash as to try to descend into one of those pit-like underground public lavatories, you would go head over heels, and if you arrived intact at the bottom, you would not be able to manoeuvre your chair into a cubicle. Try to get into a cinema, and a bland suave manager comes up with some declaration to the effect that he is very sorry for you, but the old LCC Fire Brigade Regulations do say "You may not clutter the passages and aisles".

They have, through empathy, through placing themselves in the experience of somebody else, discovered what handicaps are endured by others. And very softly we then say: "What are you going to do about it?" "How do you mean, Mr. Dickson, do about it?" "Well, some of you are 18; you have reached a voting age; you are at all events young citizens. Are you satisfied that this is the provision in the capital city of Great Britain for the handicapped? Let's take the lavatories - the one single, most inhibiting factor, which prevents handicapped people from undertaking ordinary journeys into a city because of the acute embarrassment it may cause. Who is responsible? It is the Public Health Committee. Who is the Chairman? Find out his name, even discover his private address, because many offices have secretaries who divert such uncomfortable letters. You should put this to him with courtesy; put to him the experience you have undergone, and a recommendation that if they could make provision for this kind of thing at Heathrow Airport, surely here and there in a capital city there should be facilities of this kind for the handicapped.

"What are you going to do about the cinema? Let's look in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book. Is there a Federation of London Cinema Owners? Do they have a house magazine or a trade journal? Couldn't we put a letter in, describing our experience, advocating that they would not be bankrupted if they took out the seats in the back row, where, after paying, a wheel-chair case could sit?

"Now the library, that's easy, isn't it? We could make, in our own school, our own college or our own youth workshop, a wooden ramp. We could offer to send our own young electrician to install a bell at street level and even a mirror so that the librarian, from where he sits, could see whether it was a genuine wheel-chair case. Of course, these young people discover that the bump and the jarring at the bottom of the spine as their wheel-chair goes over a curb-stone is as nothing compared with the bruising they get in their first encounter with public authorities. But this is a vital part of democracy, to know how to approach authority with a view to bettering the conditions of those who may be inarticulate.

Problem solving brings back to mind a tropical setting, a bay - a view not dissimilar from what meets the eye in many a West Indian island. On the veranda of a training centre, young Nigerians were sitting, engaged in an evening sing-song, when up the stairs came a young man in a clinical white coat, asking to speak to me. The music stopped because his announcement was a terrible one. He was a medical orderly from the nearby plantation labour lines, and so far as he could see, he had three cases of typhoid on his hands; what help could we give? It was no good trying to telephone the General Hospital in Victoria, because, since the storm the night before, the telephone line was down. This was the problem now suddenly facing our trainees: what could they do?

One group starting off, armed with their mosquito nets, struck me as curious, and I asked them why they were so equipped. "We have to prevent anybody else from being bitten by these insects." "Yes, but is typhoid spread by insects? Did anyone of us ask the medical orderly before he hurried back to his plantation camp? No, we didn't. As a matter of fact, am I not right, it is a water borne disease?" There was another group setting out with enormous great cutlasses. Had they thought of the consequences of arriving in darkness, as a group of strangers armed with cutlasses, at a camp already on the verge of panic owing to this frightful disease? Their reply humbled me, as they said, "Well, we've got to put up a quarantine camp to isolate them, and that's why we're bringing cutlasses." Then in darkness, in silence, we set off for the labour lines. Then, of course, and only then, did I reveal that it was just an exercise, contrived by me, artificially. In obvious emotional relief, the Catholics crossed themselves and the Baptists exclaimed, "Hallelujah! No typhoid!"

What were we trying to do? We were trying, within the confines of a training course, to get the young men to react to this kind of emergency - not so exaggerated, not so inconceivable in a developing country - and the responsibility, which was not something that could always be pinned to a Government Department; this time it was their's.

Problem solving in action

One does not, of course, have to contrive these emergencies; one can take the disasters that do occur. I remember a visit to India, two years ago. In Maharashtra State, there had just been an appalling earthquake which devastated one particular area, Koina, where every building and every school was razed to the ground. When the news reached India's College of Technology at Powai, on the outskirts of Bombay, every Indian student instinctively put his hand in his pocket to subscribe something for relief. Then the Principal, the equivalent to Vice Chancellor, strode in and said, "Gentlemen, I never doubted that you would want to raise money, but I want to put it to you that there is something more fundamental that we, as a College, can provide. We can't tackle the totality of this problem; what we can tackle is one particular aspect, and seeing that we are in education, let it be a contribution to the children." Within twenty-four hours, pooling their ideas, the students came up with a design for an earthquake-proof school. Dr. Bose, the Principal, simultaneously mobilised the apprentice-workshops in that area of Bombay to weld a prototype, and then he addressed a second question to the students. Was it their wish that he should telephone the Director of Public Works or the Commissioner for Disaster Relief, to see whether, since the equipment was ready, they would like to take delivery of it? Or would students prefer to go themselves to Koina, themselves to erect the equipment, making any last minute alterations in design? No need to tell you which they chose. With one shout, they said, "To Koina!" The Principal then walked across to the air-conditioned common room, the senior staff quarters, and said, "Gentlemen, are you prepared to see our boys sweat in the sun in Koina, blistering their hands, while we sit here?" So virtually the whole of Bombay's College of Technology transferred itself to Koina, and in the words of one of the students, "This was our finest hour". As a result, all this led to a new policy at the College of Technology to have discussions with every technical department in Maharashtra State, so as to see in what ways their students, as part of their training, could be making contributions to the various technological problems confronting the authorities.

I would like to think that technical colleges in the Caribbean and the University of the West Indies asked for all the papers relating to the appalling disaster of the sunken boat at St. Kitts to see if a technical component was somehow lacking, for which they could provide a technical solution.

We had a disaster about two years with a trawler, the "Casita", sinking off the coast of Devon with the loss of all hands on board, but the serious thing was the fact that washed-up drowned the following day were some of the seamen, wearing the latest, just-about-to-be-approved pattern of life jacket. Despite all the tests that one assumes were undergone, when it in fact came to the crunch, the tapes had slipped, and instead of suspending the head above water, the jacket had thrust it below water. All this came out in the inquiry. Months later, I had to address an educational establishment where the trainees had a very limited range of action. It was, in fact, a Borstal, an institution for young offenders. Three days beforehand I telephoned the manufacturers, whose name had been divulged in the newspaper account of the inquiry, and three of the detective life-jackets were sent by train to me. I took them to the Borstal and flung them at these lads and their staff. "Test them in your swimming pool - with your good swimmers, your non-swimmers, your medium swimmers; test them wearing nothing but swimming trunks and test them wearing duffle coats and rubber boots; test them with care in daylight and test them at night in simulated panic. Who knows? It might be given to you and your instructors, some of whom served in the Royal Navy or the Marines, to come up with answers which have defeated the experts."

May I repeat: there is a need for problem-solving in training programmes.

Adventure in training

What does the name 'Tobago' spell to anyone from Britain Britain? I think it spells Alexander Selkirk, Daniel Defoe and Robinson Crusoe. I wonder whether a Robinson Crusoe approach might have a part to play in our Youth Camps. If you are washed up - socially, if not literally - there appears really to be little prospect of survival. What are you going to do about it? Perhaps groups of Robinson Crusoe's faced with this situation of having to fend for themselves, of making do with what they find about them, might be one approach to training in initiative and self-reliance. And might this not help to inject an important element of fun and adventure into our training programme? There's a

Turkish proverb to the effect that 'when the house is finished, death enters in'. I would interpret it to mean that the excitement, the purpose, lies in the actual building. When it's finished, something goes out of it. So I would suggest that the Robinson Crusoe approach might have more than one thing to commend it.

Relating the curriculum to reality

Furthermore, suppose the training camp was itself looked upon by the whole island, by the whole neighbourhood, as a place to which they came for help? Near to the training camp that I ran in the Cameroons umpteen years ago was a Government Trade Training Centre at Ombe, turning out after 3 to 4 years what were, one hoped, highly-qualified craftsmen. In that part of the Cameroons, it was virtually impossible to get your car repaired; if something went wrong you were in a fix, and when we took our cars to the Government Trade Training Centre, we were sharply informed that it wasn't their job to be mending Government officers' cars; that was our responsibility - they had their training programme to attend to. It didn't occur to them that the mending of our cars, in real-life situations, would provide just that reality which their training was lacking. A year later they were pleading with Civil Servants and others to take their cars to their training centres. Training Centres benefit when the local neighbourhood looks to them for help in a variety of problems.

Does curriculum reform - to relate the syllabus to the realities of the situation in the West Indies - necessarily mean a diminution of academic values? In their concern that young people should not be further alienated from the possibility of a livelihood on the land, some have implied that if this entails jettisoning much of what passes for schooling today, then it is a price that should be paid. But a curriculum that is orientated to the needs of the community does not necessitate a debasement of its intellectual content. On the contrary, it could mean a sharpening of the intellectual challenge.

In a school on the outskirts of Manchester - a school where most of the children leave at 15 years to enter the labour market - a mistress teaches science in such a way that the pupils respond to human needs. Three years ago they devised an alarm clock to waken the deaf. The children went round the hair-dressers, asking to be given old, out-of-date or broken-down electrical hair-dryers. After repairing these in the science laboratory, they linked them in electrical combination with alarm

clocks and installed the resulting mechanism beside the bed of those who were deaf. At the required hour, without outside aid, they would be woken by a blast of warm air on their face from the hair-dryer!

The following year they perfected a contrivance that sounds an alarm when a baby is snatched from a perambulator. Last year they tackled the problem of old people living alone who collapse - from a stroke, a seizure, a heart attack - and lie, possibly unconscious, on the floor of their home, unable to alert neighbours to their plight: when their absence is noticed, it may be too late, for they may be dead. How could they be helped? After considering the problem from every angle they concluded that they had to evolve some piece of equipment which would operate by virtue of the fact that one had done nothing, rather than that one had taken some specific action - quite a sophisticated concept.

Eventually they came up with a solution - a time-switch attached to the lavatory chain: every time the chain was pulled the dial was pulled back to zero, but if the toilet was not used after a twelve hour interval, then the time-switch triggered off an alarm. They held a small Press Conference and the next day the school was telephoned by welfare authorities in Manchester and Lancashire enquiring about the possibilities of developing the device. Think of the impact on these children, of very ordinary academic backgrounds, of discovering that science actually related to every-day life and of finding that they had it within them to help those in need.

In another school the sixth formers locate their debate once a month not in the assembly hall, but in the convalescent ward of a psychiatric hospital, where patients are recovering from nervous breakdowns. Choosing a subject of topical or general interest, they find the patients gathering closer and closer, until finally they are taking part in the debate. This is, of course, the object of the exercise.

In India, students of Gulbarga Law College have boarded trains to convince ticketless passengers that it is the people of India they are robbing by fare-evasion. By applying their legal knowledge to a real-life problem facing the railway administration, by exercising the capacity of persuasion that will be an essential part of their intended profession, these students perform a public service.

Earlier this year student unions throughout England began to plan how they might disrupt the matches that the South African cricket team were to play this summer - and manifold and daring were their preparations to spoil the pitches and hold up play. I put it to them that there were more positive ways of expressing their abhorrence of Apartheid and racial discrimination. Could not every student of physical education coach one coloured immigrant youngster to such a degree of sporting or athletic excellence as would assure him a place in any team of his peers? Let me repeat: relating the curriculum to social needs does not necessarily mean a debasement of its intellectual challenge.

Who shall be trained?

In the United States children at school who are in distress do not always turn to a teacher or counsellor. The small girl in tears may run to the old woman who runs a candy-shop across the road; the youngster who is being bullied may be found sitting on the coals in the boiler-room, pouring out his heart to the janitor. It is these individuals (perhaps because they do not exercise authority?) who are frequently found to be those in whom the young under stress will confide and whose advice they will heed. Why not give them a little informal training so that their counselling may be still more effective?

When I was Head of UNESCO's Technical Assistance Mission in Iraq, endeavouring to train rural welfare workers, I found that the Iraqi teachers attached to us had little inclination for village life. They had volunteered for work with UNESCO in the expectation that it would lead to scholarships in Europe. When it led, on the contrary, to the pitiful and poverty-stricken Arab settlements in the countryside, it became clear that they wanted to remain in Baghdad. My feeling was that we should turn instead to the Army, and seek out those young Corporals or Sergeants who were to be discharged back to their villages at the conclusion of their two-years of military service. Because they were essentially peasants, they did not pine for the bright lights of town; they were happy to resume their rural life. Since they had acquired two or three stripes on their arm, it was reasonable to assume that they had some modest capacity for leadership. Give them some simple training, I reasoned, and they would stay content in the countryside, doing what they could to improve the welfare of their fellow-peasants.

From these two examples an axiom of some general relevance begins to emerge. Take those with aptitude, who are not emotionally opposed to the work and who are already engaged in it: upgrade them with some increased skills: and give them a greater feeling of personal significance. Then you have the likelihood that they will remain on the job and not abscond for what they believe to be more prestigious work, to which they may be quite unfitted.

"Consumer" training

It takes two to make a success of a job, the employer as well as the employee. Is understanding and adaptability to be required only of the worker? In my organisation in Britain we believe that those who use our volunteers - hospital matrons, superintendents of institutions, social workers etc. - need insight into the potentialities of our young people, just as much as the latter require briefing. Would you not feel, in regard to the placement of young people seeking work, that it is worthwhile considering whether hotel managers and personnel officers, for example, can be given some insight into how to get the best out of youngsters? A word of advice here. Never use the word 'training' in their hearing. 'Training' is not for people like ourselves, in senior positions of responsibility, is it? But call it a 'sharing of experience' - so that no one feels he is going to be at the receiving end of somebody else's superior wisdom - and we are quite happy to attend a seminar or whatever you care to call it. If we go away from this experience with some new ideas, then surely we have undergone a training process.

The value of shared experience

How can attitudes be changed? People often respond more sympathetically when help is asked of them rather than when help is given to them. It is, after all, more flattering to be approached for our help: few of us like to think that we need good done to us. Tim was an 18-year-old who had some months to spare between school and university, and we attached him to a multi-racial school in Southall, near London, where his role was to help a group of immigrant Asian children with their English. Returning from school at 4.00 p.m., after a fortifying cup of British tea at his lodgings, he would go round streets, knocking on doors, to ask elderly English ladies for their help. His children, he explained, went home after school and there in their families until next morning they would be talking Urdu, Gujerati, Tamil, Malayalam, Bengali etc., thereby forgetting most of what he had been teaching them throughout the day. Could he

bring them some of his Indian youngsters after school, so that they could practise their English? With infinite caution some of these English ladies would agree, and Tim would rush back to class next morning to say: "Boys, do you know there are old English ladies living here who have never been visited? We will help them, won't we?" So, when two turbaned 13½ year-old Sikh boys spent half an hour with old English ladies, who was helping whom? Each was convinced that they were needed by the other - and so of course they were.

In the context of the situation in Trinidad, suppose that the more fortunate young were to be asked to help the less fortunate. Suppose, for example, that apprentices undergoing the excellent training courses organised by the major industrial companies were to be attached to the Youth Camps for some three months in rotation, to impart the skills that they themselves were just learning to master. When one has to teach is the moment one really learns. The apprentices would be deepening their own familiarity with their craft in passing it on to others.

But does this have to be confined to industrial apprentices? Might not 18/19 year-olds, who have some time to spare between their GCE results and their eventual entry into university, college or some other form of further education, devote those months to sharing life with the less privileged young people in the Youth Camps, both giving something of their talents and receiving in return the friendship of young fellow-citizens of different backgrounds? Surely one vital aspect of democracy is this sharing of experience - and it is equally vital to the concept of common citizenship and nationhood.

We are extending this concept even more widely in Britain. Many Chief Constables are enabling their entrants into the Police Force to have, during their last few months of training, some opportunity to learn about the community. We are placing these cadets in every kind of situation of social need. In places like the Boys' Industrial School and other institutions for juvenile delinquents, these young policemen are working (in plain clothes) with these boys, helping them in sports and every other activity. This cross-fertilisation of experience is immensely valuable. Young policemen learn to see the social implications of disturbed family backgrounds, while young offenders learn that the police are not necessarily their sworn enemies.

Incidentally, just before my departure for this conference, we wrote to Police Forces in many parts of Britain, asking

them for their ideas on how school children could help them. This request took them by surprise. They were familiar with the concept of the Police helping schools, with instruction in rules of the road, etc. But the notion that children might be able to help them, the Police, was obviously startling. It is going to be very interesting to see how ready some Chief Constables are to accept help from the young, and even to see roles for them in their work.

Reflecting a philosophy

One last thought, or a combination of last thoughts. Do our headquarters reflect the philosophy of the field? By this, I do not mean that I expect to find Texaco Headquarters exuding oil. But I do expect any headquarters to reflect the philosophy of its operation. Young people finding their way to a headquarters ought not to be confirmed in their current belief that they can't trust anybody over 30. In how many Ministries of Education do you get the feeling that these are people alive to learning? Admittedly, they reflect experience in teaching, but are they themselves alive to learning? I believe there has got to be an infinitely closer relationship between what happens in the field and what happens at headquarters. If yours is an organisation that sends young people out to do brave things, does your headquarters reflect equally the qualities of self-reliance and imaginative creativity back at base?

The inventor of the Hovercraft, who we British are convinced is an Englishman, recently gave an interview on his resignation, after an appalling row with one of those national corporations or institutions which governments set up to develop bright inventions until such time as there is a proper commercial market for them. In a rather poignant interview he said that inventors were regarded as wild, half-crazy creatures who might do brilliant things in the laboratory, but who at all costs must be kept away from the company's boardroom or the factory-floor, lest production be disrupted. It was policy, he complained, to shackle the inventor with his creative mind to some administrator, with hard, practical experience of conventional finance and management. This, he said, led only to frustration and sterility. The success of Rolls-Royce at the beginning of the century had been due to the inventor meeting a financier equally creative and bold in his field as the engineer was in his - so that there was a true union of imaginative minds. Of how many organisations which deal with the young can one feel that those in charge reflect the qualities of youth?

This union of minds, this sharing of experience is urgently needed in so many fields. A few months ago I was asked to advise the Nigerian Vice-Chancellors on how a year of National Service, i.e. helping the community, particularly in the rural areas, could be injected into the university curriculum. It was required of me that I should suggest how the students might spend the year in teaching or helping in dispensaries or in small public works projects. But the more I considered the implications, the more clear it became that students could not be expected to go and do this kind of thing on their own: their work would only be effective if it were an extension of what they were studying at the university. In other words, the Faculty itself had to be involved as well: lecturers, yes, and even professors, would have to spend some time with their students in the field, working together to bring help and enlightenment to where help and enlightenment were needed. We cannot be advocating that the young engage in arduous service unless we adults are prepared to make comparable sacrificial contributions.

In talking to schools in Britain I generally make two points. Firstly, you can no longer pay others to do your loving for you. The fact that your parents pay taxes does not absolve you from making your contribution - in personal service and care for others: you cannot hive off this responsibility on to professional social workers; you too are needed. Secondly, every young person, irrespective of his academic ability, has something which he can give to others. Frequently a hand goes up and I am asked: "Does this apply only to the young?" "No", I answer, "every adult has it within him to help others." "Then why, Mr. Dickson," comes the reply, "is it that in this school there is only one single member of staff who identifies himself with our community service work?" How is one to answer that question?

We who are engaged in social work are apt to divide people into two categories - givers and receivers, professionals and the public, experts and volunteers, social workers and clients - in other words, the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. But I think of a senior executive who is in charge of finance in a certain company. At 4.00 p.m., one afternoon a month, he leaves the office to attend a meeting of a voluntary organisation, where his advice as Honorary Treasurer is crucial. Later that same evening, because of tensions in his own family life, he consults a Marriage Guidance Counsellor. Within six hours he has laternated in the roles of professional, volunteer and client. Ladies and gentlemen - we are all clients today.