

THE YOUTH TRAINING PROGRAMME IN
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

contributed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago
Division of Community Development and Youth Affairs
Office of the Prime Minister

1. Trinidad and Tobago celebrated the seventh anniversary of its Independence on 31st August, 1969. In the tradition of all developing countries, it has been subject to the socio-economic ills which are the natural consequences of this change of status, industrialisation, urbanisation, mechanisation, and last but no means least, the population explosion.

2. Though it is to our credit that international experts have been loud in their praises of our economy which has often been described as both stable and vibrant, we are, nevertheless, compromised by the almost world-wide phenomena of unemployment, underemployment and unemployability.

3. The Government is most concerned over the ever-increasing number of school leavers - primary and secondary - who are swelling the ranks of the unemployed on the labour market.

4. This concern is doubly aggravated by the disturbing realisation that the old colonial English Grammar School type of education was not really preparation enough for the exacting demands of industry. Vocational and technical training for youths, therefore, by reason of the attendant circumstances, has become the top priority consideration in the national development.

The Drain of Technical Skill

5. The drain of technical skills to the economically more attractive large industrial countries underscores the need for vocational training.

6. While this drain could be interpreted as a big advertisement for the high level of technical skill reached by our workers, it cannot be gain-said that, carried to its logical conclusion, such an exodus could not only leave us perilously short-handed, but could well paralyse our industrial develop-

ment programme throughout the coming years.

Training

7. Training for youths is carried out under two programmes:
- a) Ordinary
 - b) Extra-ordinary

Ordinary:

8. Skills development addressed to manpower needs is given either through the organisation of training within industry or at Government-maintained Technical Institutes.

9. All the major industries - oil, sugar, etc., - have their Trade Schools and Apprenticeship Training Schemes for the children of their employees. This is an industrial imperative calculated to maintain a constant supply of skills needed in the industry. Outstanding trainees sometimes receive scholarships leading to degrees in Engineering - Mechanical, Electrical, etc.

10. Recent events have somehow resulted in the intensification of the apprenticeship schemes of the major industries. These have even gone to the extent of running crash courses to accommodate some of the large number of the youthful unemployed.

11. The John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, situated in Port-of-Spain, is among the best equipped and most outstanding schools of its kind in the Caribbean. Under expert tutors, John S. Donaldson offers Day and Night Classes in all the traditional trades and skills, in Office and Business Management, as well as in Hotel and Catering Service.

12. Minimum qualifications for admission to this institute ensure the capacity to profit from the courses, which are both rigid and demanding. Graduates receive National Certificates of Competence and are in great demand in their respective fields.

13. The San Fernando and the Point Fortin Technical Institutes are the southern counterparts of John S. Donaldson. These institutes are all administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Extra-ordinary:

14. This is a Government-financed programme geared towards

the rapid development of the skills of unemployed, unskilled youth between 17 and 21 years, with special consideration to the under-privileged and depressed areas. The emphasis is on the practical. This extra-ordinary or accelerated programme is carried on mostly in Youth Camps and, to a lesser extent, in Trade Centres.

15. The training enables the participant, once he has finished the two year residential course, to work as a helper in qualified or semi-qualified occupations, rising from the unemployed to the working status where he is then able, through complementary instruction, to obtain the required knowledge for his full employment in industry or to engage in his own business. The criteria for participation are considerably less demanding than those for the Technical Institutes.

16. Government has recently set up the Division of Youth Affairs specifically to deal with youth activities. The chief concern of the Division of Youth Affairs is the extension of the Youth Camp programme.

Youth Camps

17. There are four youth camps:-

- a) Persto Praesto - the pioneer youth camp of the nation - started in 1964. It is situated in Central Trinidad on lands covering an area of over 250 acres.
- b) Mt. St. George - situated in the island-ward of Tobago - covers an area of about 300 acres.
- c) Chatham - situated in the country of St. Patrick, South Trinidad - covers an area of about 300 acres.
- d) Chaguaramas - situated in the former Naval Base on the north-western peninsula. There are facilities in this camp to make it the biggest, numerically and otherwise.

Trade Skills:

18. The following trade skills are taught by paid instructors :

Auto-mechanics	Carpentry
Welding	Woodwork
Electrical installation	Masonry
Plumbing	Tailoring
Auto-body straightening and painting	Pottery

19. Because of the facilities existing at Chaguaramas it is proposed to set up television, radio and refrigeration shops.

Agriculture

20. Agriculture receives top-priority consideration in all Government Development programmes and so Youth Camps are all to some degree agriculturally-oriented, engaging in both Crop and Animal Husbandry.

21. The phased development of all camps has as its goal the total cultivation of camp acreage. Self-sufficiency in edible crops, poultry products and pork is the objective of all camps.

22. Chatham is the most agriculturally-oriented of all the camps.

23. Example is better than precept and Government has been leading the way by handing over to many ex-campers with an agricultural bent well-equipped farms under the Crown Lands Holdings Development Scheme. These farms are being developed much to the benefit of all concerned - the young farmers and the purchasing public.

24. A new dimension now engaging the minds of Government is the setting up of co-operative farms whereby large tracts of arable land are handed over for development by hand-picked young men who are interested in agriculture.

Induction

25. The role of the Defence Forces in the Youth Camp project is important. The six weeks period of induction to camp living is conducted by the officers of the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment who take the new trainees through a programme of drill, physical training and recreational activities. This builds up team spirit and promotes camp discipline. Ultimately it is hoped that the Defence Force will not be involved in the induction exercises.

Proposed New Camps

26. The Youth Camp programme is paying off handsomely and Government has already given the green light for the setting up of additional youth camps. The proposed sites for new camps are:-

- a) North Eastern Counties
- b) Nariva-Mayaro
- c) Cedros
- d) Tobago
- e) Palo-Seco
- f) Victoria

Culture and Literacy

27. The cultural side is not forgotten since the Cultural Division of the Community Development Division conducts regular classes in drama, art, sculpture, music and folk-singing. There are also classes in Carnival costume designing and metal work.

28. Intellectual development activities and remedial education, aimed at awakening and improving cases of lapsed literacy and low academic attainment, are carried on through classes which provide opportunities to read, write, record and discuss. These classes are now conducted by camp administrative personnel, but plans are afoot to employ qualified teachers residing in the camp area.

Dearth of Instructors

29. The exodus of skilled tradesmen to other countries has reached the point where trade instructors are leaving their traditional roles for the more lucrative ones in overseas industry. Our training programme, especially in the Youth Camps, is thus in danger of being greatly impaired. Since the Caribbean nations are yet in the industrial doldrums, it would fulfill a pressing need if a battery of instructors in the vocational skills - auto mechanics, welding, plumbing, radio and television repairs etc. - could be assigned to the different islands and attached to Youth Camps, Trade Centres, and Technical Institutes in much the same way as the Peace Corps operates.

30. Of greater import is the recommendation that, set against the background of the lack of technical skills in the region and the burgeoning need of industry for such skills, plans be set in motion to launch, among the participating CARIFTA countries, a regional Vocational and Technical Training programme based on the philosophy of the Colombo Plan which has done so much to vitalise and give meaning to the industrial and, therefore, the economic life of South-East Asia.

Girls' Camp

31. It would appear that there is a preference for Boys' Youth Camps. This is a natural consequence of their greater visibility; their unemployability is more easily recognisable and therefore calls for more urgent attention. The girls, however, are not forgotten. The sod has already been turned, the plans drawn and work begun on the El Dorado Girls' Youth Camp. The emphasis in training in this camp will be on home economics and domestic science - sewing, cottage industries, hair-dressing etc. This is the first of many such camps planned for girls.

The Private Sector

32. The private sector, both industrial and commercial, has been giving great support to the Youth Camp programme by making substantial donations, both in cash and kind. Many ethnic groups have also done much to make a meaningful contribution to the youth camp project.

Holiday Training Camps

33. There are also two Holiday Training Camps situated near the sea - one on Nelson Island, the other at Tembladora Beach - which are regularly used by over 500 Youth Groups operating in the country. In each there are facilities to accommodate 50 trainees. Leadership Training Courses and Seminars, extending from week-ends to ten days, are the main exercise. Religious bodies also operate their own training camps catering for the youths of their respective faiths in other parts of the territory.

Trade centres

34. The great demand for Youth Camp places by the unemployed young men has highlighted the disturbing situation which exists in the Trinidad youth scene. As a result Government has further extended the extra-ordinary programme by establishing a number of Trade Centres. In effect this means a crash training programme.

35. There are four such centres recently constructed and about to go into operation. These are: -

- a) Basilon Street

- b) Sea Lots
- c) Chaguanas
- d) Point Fortin

36. Two Trade Centres are now in the course of construction, one in Basilon Street and the other in Point Fortin. Shell Trinidad Ltd. has donated the steel frames that are being used in the mounting of the Trade Centres. The plan for the establishment of the Trade Centres envisages that in the immediate future additional centres will be located in Chaguanas, Malick, Sea Lots and South East Port-of-Spain.

37. These Centres will provide training in trades such as carpentry, masonry, welding, plumbing, electrical installation and house painting. Trainees will comprise youths whose ages range from 17-21 years. Preference generally will be given to those over 18 years of age. Training will be both intensive and full time. It is hoped that at the conclusion of the training some of the trained people will be able to obtain employment of a semi-skilled nature in the construction industry.

38. A substantial number of applications have been submitted to the Ministry in response to the invitation for applications for entry into these Trade Centres. The Ministry of Planning and Development is giving thought to the location of additional Trade Centres in certain parts of the country.

39. The Trade Centre Plan is a very modest one. A temporary dismountable shed with panelled BRC walls will accommodate the trade classes. Classes will cover both theoretical and practical subjects.

Youth Centres

40. With a view to making capital of every opportunity for vocational training, it has been planned to equip the six Youth Centres with facilities for instruction in trade skills to the groups affiliated to the individual centre. These centres are situated in the following areas :

- 1) St. James)
- 2) Laventille) All within the limits
- 3) Woodbrook) of the capital city
- 4) Basilon Street)

- 5) John John)
- 6) California - situated in central Trinidad

41. These centres will attempt to fulfill the role so ably carried out by the many Young Men's Christian Associations in large American cities.

Youth employment service and trade centres

42. The Ministry of Planning and Development is now engaged on the establishment of a Youth Employment Service as an integral aspect of the National Youth Service. The specific aim of the Youth Employment Service is to assist young people in obtaining employment. It will operate in the knowledge that youths must exercise initiative in the matter of gaining a livelihood. However, the Ministry recognises that because of the concentration of unemployed young people in some locations, assistance in finding jobs is a necessity. The Youth Employment Service is being developed with this end in view.

43. The plan for the establishment of the Youth Employment Service envisages the appointment of Placement Officers. These Officers will undertake the tasks of establishing and maintaining contacts with various industries in the private sector, with Statutory Boards and other agencies that employ young workers. A salient feature of their work will be to give active encouragement to voluntary organisations to undertake projects of an economic nature. The aim will be that participants will derive some income, however limited, from these ventures. It is envisaged also that Co-operatives Enterprises will be engaged in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries.
