

CHAPTER 5

PROGRAMMES FOR ACTION

The seminar reflected upon the discussions on youth problems in Cyprus and recommended that certain initiatives be taken with a view to easing some of the difficulties. Although reviews of the various problems had been made previously by visiting experts from overseas, few of their recommendations had to date been implemented. The seminar expressed the hope that determined use would be made of the report of the present meeting by those in a position to take action. The opportunity for an exchange of views among representatives of all departments and organisations vitally interested in youth affairs was welcomed, and participants were convinced that their deliberations had sown seeds for action. The work would begin, in fact, where the seminar ended.

Youth leadership training

The need for trained youth leaders was held by the seminar to be an urgent priority. Frequently youth work was carried out by those already fully occupied in other posts, a situation which sometimes led to inefficiency in both areas.

Whether such training took place in Cyprus or overseas, it was felt that youth leaders should be particularly sensitive to social change. In Cyprus, where society entrusted the transmission of values largely to the family and the teacher, there was likely to be some initial difficulty in persuading parents to accept another kind of agent in the socialisation process.

The assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat would be welcomed in the provision of a person experienced in the field as a consultant, to advise on the most appropriate kinds of training, on methods of recruitment and selection, and on the financial implications of establishing a local training course.

Facilities for young people

The seminar agreed unanimously that there should be increased provision for young people in the form of youth clubs, which should preferably be mixed. In view of the prevailing attitudes of society towards mixed activities, however, it was suggested that initially new clubs might be segregated with "part-time" mixing on, perhaps, two or three evenings a week.

The possibility of encouraging industries to provide recreational activities for young people was also mentioned.

Education

The role of the school was frequently brought into question during the discussions. The seminar agreed that a revision of the curriculum was urgently needed and recommended that such reappraisal should be followed up with continuing evaluation.

The seminar recommended that the adult education programme should be expanded in order that those who had not had an opportunity to further their education beyond the secondary stage, or more particularly the primary stage, might be enabled to play a more confident role in their community.

Employment

Although the unemployment problem in Cyprus is small in comparison with many other Commonwealth countries, unemployment for the individuals affected is a matter of vital importance. The seminar recommended that vocational guidance services should be improved by being linked with manpower planning and should be expanded so that all young people might be given sound advice at the most appropriate stage of their school career as to what type of employment they could most profitably direct their studies towards.

There was also a felt need for assistance for young people leaving school at various stages to find suitable employment.

Exchange of personnel

The value of visits by young people to other countries was accepted by the seminar, which sought the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat in arranging such visits.

The Commonwealth Secretariat Clearing House Fund might, it was suggested, enable one or two people with a keen interest in youth work to visit developing Commonwealth countries with a view to broadening their insights into and understanding of the problems faced by young people elsewhere.

Research into youth problems

The seminar realised that many new issues in the youth field had been brought to light in the course of their deliberations, and all seemed to merit deeper study. Apart from newly acknowledged aspects of the youth situation, in most areas there existed a marked lack of data and information. The need for further and deeper research was recognised. It was suggested that such projects might be carried out in co-operation with the Commonwealth Secretariat, which might assist financially by means of its budgetary provision for commissioned research.

Co-ordination of activities

Responsibility for youth programmes in Cyprus lies with several agencies, with the result that overlapping and duplication of activities occur frequently. The decision of the Government to establish a semi-official co-ordinating committee was warmly approved by the seminar, which expressed the hope that the proposed committee would direct its initial energies to co-ordinating on-going activities. It was realised that at the same time, however, some attention must be paid to the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes to meet needs which exist yet have so far been ignored.

The seminar agreed whole-heartedly that co-ordination should be translated in practice into co-operative interaction rather than "mutual interference". The autonomy of participating bodies should, it was felt, be respected and maintained.

Some doubts were expressed about how soon the proposed committee would be established. In view of the probable time-gap between the seminar, at which so many valuable exchanges of views had been made, and the setting-up of the committee, it was recommended that lest the advantages be lost the seminar participants should form themselves into an unofficial group, perhaps entitled the "Cyprus Youth Liaison Committee". It was hoped that in this way discussions between all those interested in youth might be continued. The representatives of the various youth organisations were encouraged to conduct similar seminars

within their groups to afford an opportunity for the views of young people in school, in employment, in towns and in villages, to be heard. Further seminars might be held at the regional level and later on a pan-Cyprian basis. The seminar agreed that through the interaction of young people attention could be focused on particular issues and in this way it would be possible for policy to be influenced from below.

The seminar expressed its gratitude to the Secretariat for the way in which the meeting had been conducted and requested that, if possible, a second Commonwealth seminar should be held in six months' time to ensure that the recommendations of the present seminar were followed up effectively.