

PART II

Addresses at the Opening and Closing Sessions

Opening Address
by the Hon. Mr F. Petrides
Minister of Education

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Youth is sometimes optimistically referred to as the "golden hope for the future". Whether this hope will prove true or not will depend on the kind of youth whose development the adult society is influencing by either doing the right thing for the young people or the wrong thing, or by failing to do the proper thing at the proper time. The main questions are: "What is the right or proper thing?" and "Which is the proper time to do it?" The answers to these questions are by no means easy or absolute, in the sense of being perpetually applicable, for the setting in which they are to be studied is continuously changing. Moreover, questions and setting are an integral part of each other, impossible to isolate, and this adds to the difficulty. And, to make things still more difficult, the relationship and whatever dialogue exists, or is attempted between adult and youth, is in actual fact relationship and dialogue between the youth-that-was and the youth-that-is. And the youth-that-was usually displays little understanding for the youth-that-is and this spoils the relationship.

The problems of youth are numerous, varied and complicated. They are serious not so much because of their number as because of their complexity. There are sociological, psychological, educational, financial, political, moral and, perhaps, other facets of these problems, which make their study an arduous task. Furthermore, there are organisational and administrative aspects, which, in their turn, create additional problems of equally great importance and complexity.

All these problems are by no means peculiar to Cyprus: they are problems of general relevance and wide-spread applicability. Nevertheless, some of these problems acquire a special character in view of their relation to specifically local circumstances.

I am aware that this seminar intends to look into these problems from both their universal and their local standpoints, with an emphasis on the latter. Considering the composition of this seminar, I am certain that you will succeed in your work and

that you will be able to come up with a number of useful and practicable suggestions.

You are a select group and a privileged group. You are select because all of you are either actively and successfully engaged in youth activities at this moment, or have been so in the recent past. In any case, you are all actively interested in youth problems, and that is what really matters in this case. To those of you who will not be fully covered by the definition of "youth" as you will formulate it at some stage of your work, I have two pieces of advice to offer: never be tricked into agreeing that you are no longer young, and never forget how you felt when you were actually young, not only in spirit but also in body.

You are privileged because you are lucky enough to have as leaders during your three-day deliberations such distinguished personalities as Dr James Maraj, who is the Director of the Education Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and his expert collaborators. The rich experience of Dr Maraj and his collaborators and their broad outlook will enable you to investigate our youth problems in a thorough and comprehensive way.

You are also a unique group. You are, as far as I know, the first group of such a widely representative character that has ever attempted to study the problems of Cypriot youth. The youth of Cyprus is looking to you for help and is expecting a great deal from you. I wish you all the best of luck in your work.