

## CHAPTER 5.

### PROGRAMMES FOR ACTION

Youth problems have been subject to frequent definition and explanation. The overriding need now is to use the accumulated data to help in the formulation of programmes for action. As many countries have found over the last decade, to identify the problem is not to solve it, although it is one vital step towards a solution.

#### Control of youth programmes

In seeking to establish effective programmes for young people, governments must tread the narrow path between infringement of basic individual rights and the need to promote the best overall interests of the nation. In circumstances where resources are relatively limited and needs great, it seems essential for governments to exercise a general control over the resources by establishing policy guidelines and explaining clearly the aims and objectives of the policy. Public opinion is more likely to accept such policies if it can be demonstrated that full consultation and competent research into the needs has preceded policy formulation.

Voluntary bodies will undoubtedly continue to play a vital part in implementing programmes for young people, since official resources of finance and personnel cannot be expected to meet the needs. If the co-operation of voluntary organisations is to be ensured, provision must be made for the representation of participating agencies in the official bodies formulating policy and recommending the allocation of public funds, possibly by "matching" grants. More controversial, but equally essential, is the involvement of accepted representatives of young people themselves at the decision-making level. The example of the Malaysian National Youth Consultative Council might form a suitable model on which to design machinery for youth representation at the highest level.

#### Communication

Communication is probably the most vital component in any national planning for youth. In the course of the seminar it became increasingly apparent that goodwill and purposeful

endeavour could be brought to nothing by gaps in the chain of communication. Members spoke of the lack of vertical communication (as between younger and older members of society, between teachers and officials, between young workers and employers) and the lack of horizontal communication (among Ministries, among workers in the youth field, among different groups of young people). One further gap was not discussed and yet has considerable importance; this is the lack of communication over time, a lack of knowledge of what has been tried previously and found successful or unsuccessful. As the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, said last year:

"The most striking flaw of the information deluge is the absence of a sense of history which is indispensable to all wisdom".

"Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it". While undue reverence need not be paid to precedent, it is essential for the economic implementation of new programmes that an adequate background to decision is compiled.

In this connection, too, a further point arises. Few accounts exist of projects and programmes which have proved less than successful. So many interests militate against the publication of material detailing failures, and yet such accounts could be of much value. In many cases they would be at least equal in value to success stories, because they would highlight the factors which prevented success and so benefit the organisers of all succeeding programmes. Perhaps what is needed is a vocabulary which will permit the admission of failure without loss of face. Particular attention should be paid, too, to means by which enthusiasm and commitment may be sustained.

Among specific suggestions arising from the seminar were several relating to the improvement of communication, such as:

- a) a standing committee on vocational guidance;
- b) a consultative group representing educators and employers;
- c) a co-ordinating committee on delinquency;
- d) a standing committee comprising all those working in the youth field;
- e) a National Youth Consultative Council representing youth and with access to the highest levels of government;

- f) an inter-Ministerial group to determine youth policies in the context of national development.

### Participation

The seminar believed that much more use could be made of the potential contribution by young people to their communities and nation. It was suggested that a reduction in the age of franchise would both indicate confidence in the maturity of younger people and allow direct involvement in the affairs of the country. Outlets for the expression of opinion by young people might include increased use of existing journals and the production of new magazines.

### Delinquency

One area of special concern to young people at the seminar was that of delinquency. The need for preventive measures was stressed and the possible role in this connection of other young people emphasised. An extended probation service, including the use of young volunteers as informal probation officers, would probably result in an overall saving to public funds by reducing expenditure on custodial and remedial measures for offenders. Revised legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility would permit more flexible and enlightened treatment of the child who is likely to adopt a pattern of continuing anti-social behaviour. A standing committee on delinquency could be of value.

### Insecurity

Delinquency was seen as one manifestation of the sense of insecurity common to most young people, uncertain of themselves, their social role and their chances of obtaining secure and satisfying employment. While legislation alone cannot solve the problem, some legal sanctions could be useful to minimise the exploitation of young people in general and girls in particular. The four categories of young person considered to warrant priority when plans are being drawn up included educated young people, those in rural areas, the handicapped and eldest children of families. All of these groups were thought to suffer particular forms of deprivation and suggestions made to alleviate the situation.

## Education and training

The time seems suitable for a comprehensive review of the Islands' provision of education and training in an attempt to relate these more directly to the needs of individuals and the aims and objectives of national development policy. Tinkering with the curriculum alone does not effect change if the general structure of the system remains unaltered. The whole, in this case, is greater than the sum of its parts; the effect of the system as a whole will continue despite changes in particular aspects.

In reviewing the system the purposes for which it is believed to exist should be examined and set against the objectives which it in fact achieves; it may not be that these are identical. Any restructuring of the system should start from a clear exposition of the aims and objectives. Upon this can be built the structure most likely to lead to their realisation. Continuing evaluation of the system should enable errors to be corrected and improvements to be incorporated. One particular area worth examination in detail is the articulation of the formal education system with out of school activities, and the incorporation of all forms of education and training into a national system of provision at all levels and for all purposes. Improved training facilities, professional standards and rewards for youth workers should be considered in this context.

## Employment

The seminar considered various possibilities for generating employment opportunities and stemming the rise in unemployment. In the short-term it was thought that measures such as raising the school leaving age and establishing an Emergency Labour Corps had merit, provided that their limitations were recognised and that they were incorporated as elements into a more wide-reaching and far-seeing overall employment programme.

Other measures thought worth following up included the restructuring of the labour force and a renegotiation of appropriate pay differentials; the establishment of an ongoing manpower survey; an improved system of labour statistics; the provision of more opportunities for apprenticeships and trade with appropriate facilities for vocational guidance.

The seminar suggested that a Commonwealth conference be held to discuss the problems of emigration and immigration now affecting a considerable number of member countries.

### Community service

In discussing the possibilities for young people to contribute practically to their communities, the seminar commended the proposal to incorporate elements of community service into the school curriculum. At the level of the university and polytechnic it was considered that the additional maturity and expertise of students at this level could be harnessed more usefully and directly to developmental needs than is the case at present.

The arrangement whereby seminar groups would continue to meet at regular intervals indicated that the gathering had been successful in creating some motivation towards purposeful involvement in national development. By extending their activities to include young people who did not participate in the seminar the seminar members could help to set up a chain reaction which would eventually awaken the interest and excite the imagination of a very large number of Maltese youth.

### Information

The seminar recognised the value of exchanging information with other Commonwealth countries on matters affecting youth and noted the existing role of the Commonwealth Secretariat as a functional clearing-house for information and a possible source of assistance in the devising, promoting and evaluation of plans and programmes.