

YOUNG PEOPLE: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

by

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Where do we start? It could perhaps be with Baden-Powell: not with his founding of the Scout movement on Brownsea Island in 1908, but rather further back to the siege of Mafeking, where he saw that in a situation of stress boys had a vital function to fulfil by running messages. Or it might be with the age grades and initiation training that characterised traditional African society, whereby the young were prepared for their role in the adult community. But in this context I think first of William James, in his famous essay on "The Moral Equivalent of War", writing in 1910 of the need to call youth

"to coal and iron mines, to freight trains, to fishing fleets in December, to road-building and tunnel-making, to foundries and stokeholes and to the frames of skyscrapers".

Then there was Lewis Mumford, in his "Faith for Living" - written in 1941, just before Pearl Harbour brought America into the war - asking

"why should the young not have their first experience of public service on work that serves for local improvement? They should be toughened off in lumber camps, on fishing boats, behind the hay-wagon and the threshing machine, on the road-gang and in the quarry. It should not need another war to effect this purposeful mobilisation of youth".

Moving from America to Asia, my mind goes back to a recent meeting in Delhi, where Mrs. Indira Gandhi told a gathering of Indian students, on the eve of National Independence Day:-

"Social service for young people in the West may be a luxury - for our young people it is a necessity".

And I recall the young night receptionist at my hotel in Teheran last summer describing his experience in the "Army of Knowledge" - the alternative form of National Service which sends high school leavers to teach in the remote rural areas of Iran - the words, "That was the one good thing I have ever done in my life".

Is this relevant to the problems in Africa that we are discussing at this conference? Not primarily. Asia (and Latin America, too) wrestles with the problem of involving the privileged, intellectual elite in the uplifting of the masses. Certainly we, too, should be considering this aspect of things during our conference. But we are concerned here in the first place with the tens of thousands of Primary School leavers whom education has alienated from the notion of subsistence farming and for whom the economy just does not provide the jobs that they crave for.

Till yesterday they were a blessing, providing the indispensable additional hands to the peasant on his farm and sustenance in his old age. Now, suddenly, they appear in the guise of a problem. The young in Africa have become, it seems, what the elderly have become in westernised society - a burden and an embarrassment. (How striking it is to discover that the highest honour that the people of Kenya can bestow on their President is the title "Mzee" - Old Man).

The Hunger for Work

Frau Dr. Wolf, a Member of West Germany's Parliament deeply concerned with overseas aid, said a few weeks ago that the poster showing a pot-bellied child no longer represented, except in isolated pockets of famine, the real nature of Africa's distress. Rather it was a school leaver staring at a "No Vacancies" notice outside some office or factory. Where formerly they passed through tests of great physical severity - to be accepted then into the adult community - today the certificate brings them into a queue of other unemployed applicants. Their initiation is into insignificance.

You are not alone, let it be said with emphasis. Seeing the young people, so obviously gifted and of such manifest goodwill, who come to your countries as overseas volunteers, it would be understandable if some Africans were filled with bitterness or envy. First, because no-one really enjoys being the recipient of other people's benevolence or being regarded as deserving of

aid. Second, because these overseas volunteers are fortunate to be in a position to give. Yet today it is not so much the Peace Corps that is relevant to Africa - as the Job Corps for America's 'drop-outs'. Because the Job Corps represents the United States' struggle to find a solution for the discards of their educational system.

Nor is this something new to America. It was in the Great Depression of the 1930s that Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps "to conserve the soil of America and the soul of America's youth". (Note, in passing, how one need - soil conservation - was to be met by another: the hunger of young people for work). That splendid phrase which David Lilienthal of the Tennessee Valley Authority, used then - "Dreamers with Spades" - could apply so well to young people in Kenya's National Youth Service or the Malawi Young Pioneers.

For some countries, resort has even had to be made to the export of youth. Malawi has for decades exported its young men to South Africa, to Rhodesia, to Zambia: "Machona" - the lost ones - they used to be called. Well, it happens elsewhere, too. The Netherlands accept that many of their young people will have to emigrate, and part of their national resources are devoted to giving them the best kind of training to prepare them for a life overseas. I myself am a detribalised Scot: it has been the lot of so many of our young people to seek their destiny beyond Scotland's border, and even today they are leaving the Highlands and Islands for work in the cities.

What the educationists would argue

What would the educationists be telling us if they had been invited to this conference? They would be saying, I think, that experience has shown it to be useless to begin an agricultural programme in the Primary Schools. At that age the children are too young and small to undertake any labour of real value. As things are, teachers care for farming as little as pupils: work on the school garden is regarded, at best, as a chore, at worst, as a punishment. Still less is its introduction feasible, in the Kenyan context, in the Harambee schools: it is at the top - at the Alliance High School, for example - that a start can be made. To present agriculture as vocational training is fatal, they argue. The only possible basis for teaching agriculture must be that, since agriculture is the way of life for 90% of the

population, it is reasonable that the subject should figure in the syllabus of secondary schools, where pupils can understand its significance in relation to other activities.

This has a robust ring of practical commonsense about it, and it may be academically sound 'as things are'. But something profounder than curriculum reform or even the concept of the community school is at stake here. For the last 40 years or so the view that education should be child-centered has prevailed in the West. Now voices are to be heard to the effect that the community, too, has claims. The sight in Africa, even today, of 6-year-old boys tending cattle, and girls of the same age carrying a baby brother or sister on their backs, hardly suggests that 13-year-olds are too young to accept responsibilities.

Trying to restore what schooling has destroyed

Leaving aside all the economic considerations, manpower implications, rural development planning and employment prospects, is it a fair hypothesis that things began to go adrift when educational responsibilities came to be seen solely as obligations that the community undertakes for the establishment of schools, rather than duties that young people assume towards the community? Today the Harambee schools represent sacrifices that the community makes for the benefit of the children, rather than vice versa.

And so we have a variety of programmes - from Man O' War Bay and similar ventures to settlement schemes and Builders Brigades - trying to restore that sense of communal endeavour and self-reliance which conventional schooling has come near to eliminating. They become almost remedial exercises: not only expensive in themselves but counterproductive in that they seek virtually to undo this particular consequence of the educational system. It is as though the two approaches were cancelling each other out. However vigorous the mopping-up operation may be, one is conscious meanwhile - in Russell Prosser's apt phrase - of the tap being left on, pouring out still more thousands of children with unfulfillable expectations.

National Youth Service: - possibilities and limitations

As one answer to this problem, several countries have established some form of National Youth Service. Through road-building and bush-clearing and similar tasks, young people contribute to their country's development, and a sense of national

unity is engendered, surpassing tribal loyalties. They aim to achieve that "purposeful mobilisation of youth" of which Lewis Mumford wrote. Nevertheless, these organisations are today drawing criticism on a number of grounds. First, they deal - principally on account of their very considerable cost - with only a small percentage of the real total. Second, they offer a kind of life - with the provision of food and uniforms and accommodation - which may make it harder, not easier, for the young people to go in for farming afterwards. At any rate they do not generate jobs to absorb their members on discharge, though some of them (e.g. Malawi Young Pioneers) link their training now to resettlement schemes.

But even if it is only for limited numbers that they provide an alternative to despair, this is surely good. Nor is it only in Africa that a sense of common belonging is needed: the recently published Report on Race Relations in Britain advocates some form of diversified National Service, chiefly because it would promote social cohesion and give young coloured immigrants a feeling of sharing in the obligations of citizenship alongside our own young people.

For the elite - or the unemployed?

Where there may be confusion of thought is whether this approach should be for the highly educated elite, or for the underprivileged workless. The Ethiopian University Service entails students teaching in village schools for a year as a basic condition of their receiving a degree, just as the Iranian Army of Knowledge, already mentioned, and the Medical Corps and Development Corps which have followed it, send Persian secondary school leavers to help in rural areas as an alternative to military service. Tanzania's concept of National Service is also moving in the same direction.

This approach would seem not to discourage local self-help, but to support it. For community development projects generally mean the people building or paying for the construction of schools and clinics, but not dealing with the recurrent costs of staffing them: this kind of National Service helps to do just that. Through the social application of the relay-race principle, these well-educated students - replacing each other at regular intervals - bring an intensity of effort to bear upon the task during their year or so of National Service. They represent something half way, so to speak, between the dedicated saint and the indifferent government employee. But this, of course, is different from the

approach required for finding permanent work for thousands of ex-Primary School leavers or preparing them for farming.

It is, however, the discipline and uniforms that go with these National Youth Service organisations which cause unease to some observers, especially to those who remember what happened to Ghana's Young Pioneers. Certainly I encountered resistance over twenty-five years ago when I urged the need for something on these lines, first in East Africa and subsequently in West Africa. The British Administrators, Educationists and Social Welfare Advisers feared that any proposal to involve young people in nation-wide service to their country must be tainted with Nazism or Fascism, and so my suggestions were fiercely rejected.

To feel wanted - the fundamental longing.

Today, it may interest you to learn, quite a number of the young people whom I am involving in community service in Britain have not volunteered: they have been sent. I have in mind the young entrants into the Police Forces, 18-year-old Cadets, who are sent to us by their authorities to have some experience of social work as an integral part of their training. Their Police Authorities believe that exposure to situations of human need - without the protection of uniform or rank - is just as vital to their training as drill or athletics or the law book.

When they enter my office it is not necessary that they should identify themselves as having been sent by their Police Authorities. The faint look of martyrdom on their faces distinguishes them from the ordinary volunteers! Some of them ask: "It's only four months I have to do, Sir, isn't it?" But then something strange happens if that same evening they open the door of a hospital ward and find themselves faced with a dozen paralysed or spastic children, whom they have to bath, put into pyjamas, lift into bed and perhaps even tell a story to before they sleep. By midnight these young men are no longer asking "Why do I have to do this?" Deep down within them they now understand why, and within days or even hours they become indistinguishable from the most spontaneous and committed of our volunteers. It is the situation, and not any words I have said to them, which has brought about this change of attitude in them. Most of us have been brought up to believe that action is a consequence of conscience. But for many young people today - and perhaps not only for the young - conscience may rather be a consequence of action. In other words, through experience we can teach the young to care.

The right to serve.

An Arab boy said to me recently in a school in Israel: "It isn't fair - here the Jewish boys are conscripted into the Forces, but we Arab boys have to volunteer!" He interpreted this to mean that the Jewish boys were wanted by the Israel authorities, and the Arab boys were not: and he was right. We have got to think much more deeply about these implications. It is no longer the simple school debating question of Compulsion versus Volunteering. It is a much profounder issue: - how do we enable young people to feel needed?

You may also be surprised when I say that in my organisation in Britain, we never reject. No matter how inadequate a young volunteer may seem to us (or himself), we never reject him. To serve overseas, that is a privilege. But to serve their own country, that is their right. (Incidentally, it is much more difficult, in our experience, to make a worthwhile contribution in one's own country than overseas. Perhaps it is because what we call Community Development in other people's countries is generally known as Politics in our own.)

Now we are taking this approach even further. We are reaching out for the disadvantaged - the handicapped, the delinquent, the immigrant. For example, we have been accepting young offenders, specially released from reformatories and other delinquency institutions. For such young people, who generally feel rejected, to discover that they are wanted by the community, to learn that they have it within their power to help others, this can bring about a change in attitude that no other training can achieve.

Handicapped as helpers

We try to find situations where to be disadvantaged can be turned to advantage. I think, for instance, of a voluntary welfare organisation which, like many other similar bodies, urgently needs to have someone who can take telephone calls at night and at weekends. Their solution: a bedridden volunteer, unable to move because of paralysis, who is happy to take calls on the telephone beside her bed, and then contact the appropriate member of staff either immediately or the following morning: she has a vital role to play, not despite her disability, but because of it.

Or I think of John - an 18-years-old and irrevocably blind - going to a centre for spastic children. These children have reached an age when they realise that they are not going to improve and are full of doubt regarding their future. Suddenly into their lives comes a young man who in their view is infinitely worse handicapped than they, and yet who not only is self-reliant but has come to help them. Furthermore, he cannot properly fulfil his function - exercising them in the swimming pool - unless they, in turn, help him. John's impact on the morale of these spastic children has probably been greater than that of any able-bodied volunteer.

This concept of reciprocity, of mutual aid, seems to me of deep significance. We had a volunteer, Tim, working with immigrant children in a London borough. After school he would knock on doors and old English ladies would enquire what he wanted. "Can you help me?" he would ask: (a classically good opening, rather than "I've come to help you!") He would explain how his Asian pupils would return home from school, and talk Urdu, Gujjerati, Tamil, Bengali, etc., with their families until their return to class the next morning, thereby undoing what he had been teaching them. Would these ladies allow some of his Indian boys to visit them, so that they might practise their English? With infinite caution, some would agree. Tim would then rush back to his class, saying: "There are old English ladies living alone in this town, who've never been visited. We're going to help them, aren't we?" And so when two 12 years - old Punjabi boys spent half an hour trying to talk with these ladies, each party was convinced that they were needed by the other, as, indeed, each was.

This may sound rather middle-class and remote from the problems of African school-leavers. But does not the absence of this concept of reciprocity bedevil relationships between developing countries and the West, making Technical Assistance and the process of giving and taking such an explosive affair? Furthermore, in the context of Africa today, workless school-leavers are to be regarded as amongst the disadvantaged. At Starehe Boys Centre in Nairobi - where to be orphaned or destitute is a condition of acceptance - boys serve as volunteers in hospitals during their holidays, growing in self-respect through the experience of being needed by others.

Education for self-reliance.

Twenty years ago a conference on this theme would have assembled with the assumption that industrialisation was the

answer. Today, with less optimism but probably with a greater sense of reality, we recognise that the majority of people in Africa will have to continue to earn their living from the land. Then do we understand the implications of education for self-reliance? "Kuuliza si ujinga", to ask is not stupid, as the Swahili saying goes. It may be a contradiction in terms to speak of organising training for self-reliance, rather like planned adventure, or prepared spontaneity.

Education for self-reliance of the kind required will not come, I fear, through the adventure training courses and award schemes that we British have pioneered. Partly because adventure for adventure's sake is something of a luxury in countries where the struggle for existence is itself sufficiently demanding; when I asked some years ago how one would translate the word into Swahili, the answer was 'Hatari' (danger) and this was not something that one sought for its own sake. Partly, too, because it can mean different things to different people.

There was a Peace Corps volunteer, assigned to a secondary school in the capital of a developing country, who wrote home plaintively; "Don't they think I'm man enough to work in the Bush?" For the overwhelming majority of young people in Africa and Asia, the excitement lies in exactly the reverse direction in the city.

During four very full years I was responsible for a scheme in West Africa which strove to relate adventure to community development. We used every kind of device to create a sense of social awareness, on the one hand simulating civil emergencies that called for individual initiative, and on the other confronting our students with problems that demanded their co-operation. I was reminded of all this a few months ago, at a gathering in France of European volunteers who had returned from service abroad. In recounting their experiences, all began by paying tribute to the preliminary training they had received in their own country, but then went on to describe the difficulties they had encountered in their projects overseas, some of them so intense that they had almost proved their undoing.

Need for sustained follow-up.

There was the young Swiss builder, sent to supervise the construction of a school in a remote part of the Cameroons, who on arrival at the site discovered not the dozen masons, carpenters plasterers etc. whom he expected, but a milling crowd of four

hundred illiterate tribesmen. There was the Peace Corps teacher in Liberia who was assailed by loneliness and isolation to such a degree that she feared a nervous breakdown, and returned before the end of her service. Then there was the German Development Corps agriculturist in Afghanistan who was warmly welcomed by peasant farmers, but just could not relate upwards to the uncaring officials. Finally, there was the Canadian teacher of physical education, posted to a Training College in Guyana, who found that there simply was no job to do: she was a pawn in a manoeuvre to justify an increased staff establishment. All of them had been trained for their assignments, but not in how to deal with frustration. All discovered that the initial preparation was not enough: they stood in need of continued help, of sustained follow-up. There is a growing feeling in social work in Britain that more important than preliminary courses today is in-service training: what really counts is the quality of supervision on-the-job. Will it not matter even more with our plans to help young African school-leavers settle on the land?

There could, however, have been an alternative explanation for the distress encountered by these volunteers in their projects. The training they received, based in every case on an institute or centre, may have given them initially too much support, and for that very reason failed to educate them for self-reliance. "Now do without me", said Nietzsche's Zarathustra. That is exactly what one young British volunteer did: destined for service in Israel, he decided to organise his own training, and contacted the local Jewish community in his nearest city (Leicester), seeking permission to attend their synagogue, studying the Talmud in translation, and enquiring how a Gentile could best make himself acceptable to them. He not only staggered the Jewish community in Leicester - but ensured his own acceptance in Israel. "Education for Self-Reliance" is the title that President Nyerere has given his book. It is a subject that we need to think deeply about, for certain kinds of institutional training, which we have depended on heavily in the past, may in effect have made it more difficult for trainees subsequently to stand on their own feet.

Changing attitudes harder than teaching skills.

The Report of the Kericho Conference, 1966, the Kenya Christian Council's "After School - What?", and so many other reports are all unanimous on one point: most African school-leaver's job-expectations are quite unrealistic. Changing

attitudes may be far harder than imparting skills. Andrew Carnegie brought highly experienced Scottish craftsmen to the States, to master the revolutionary techniques of steel-making that had been developed: ultimately he found that totally raw immigrants from Eastern Europe were able to operate the new processes much more quickly, because they had **nothing** to unlearn. When I worked in rural welfare in Iraq it was easier to get illiterate peasants to drive tractors than to get young teachers to ride horses: the latter involved a drop in status.

In its early days the Peace Corps received many requests for the American Farm Boy. Developing countries hoped that this attractive figure - in blue denim overalls, a spanner in one hand, a corncob in the other - might influence some of their own educated youth with his practical, down-to-earth approach. Alas, this cheerful personality survived only in the film "Oklahoma!" Undismayed in the conviction that the customer is always right, the Americans set about "re-tooling", to recreate him. What they did was to re-examine (mechanically, of course) the application forms, some of whose questions had been framed so as to reveal an "under-emphasised rural bias". Whilst most candidates were Liberal Arts B.A.s, the replies of a number had indicated a love of the countryside. These were the ones chosen for intensive "crash" training in agricultural techniques and behold, here were the American Farm Boys, model 1961. It had been fairly simple to give them a working knowledge of up-to-date food-growing methods, but useless to do so unless they were emotionally content to serve in rural areas.

Seductions of institutional centres.

The Foreign Service Department of Israel's Ministry of Agriculture runs courses for young agriculturists from overseas. "We cannot show them here very much that they have not learnt already at the Farm Institutes and Agricultural Colleges in their own countries", Gershon Fradkin, the Director, told me. "But here they encounter men - educated men - who love the land: and it is this feeling for farming, rather than any specific new techniques, that we try to impart here".

The Israelis understand, too, the importance of training not lasting a moment more than is strictly necessary. Prolong the duration of a course beyond a certain point and students may start wondering how they can extend it still further: with every day that passes it becomes more difficult for them to return to the harsh realities of rural work in their own communities.

A more radical way of avoiding the seductions of institutional centres is to organise training through mobile teams, which conduct campaigns or courses in situ. Staff are kept alert, having to adapt their "message" to the local problems: the whole community, rather than a chosen few, can to some extent share in what is being presented: and it avoids what our American friends call the "reverse culture-shock syndrome", the difficulty of relating the vision acquired in far-away circumstances to the situation back home. (As astronauts know, re-entry is more dangerous than blast-off.)

Frustration of training without work opportunities.

But training not followed by some work opportunity, as Guy Hunter has written, is quickly abandoned and discredited. And Freddie Wood has pointed out in one of our conference papers, training in itself cannot solve what is basically an employment problem. So how do we create jobs? With tens of thousands of their young people facing the prospect of permanent unemployment - partly as a result of automation - a group of Americans have developed a programme of "New Careers for the Poor". Even amongst the least intellectually endowed and the worst educated, they argue, there will be found those with a capacity to care for others: and these can be trained to serve as auxiliaries and aides in the "caring" professions. This approach entails not only preparing people to fill unexpected roles but adapting and reshaping established job structures so as to make use of underskilled manpower. In a quite different approach the Neighbourhood Youth Corps has been set up in many cities of the United States to enable socially deprived youngsters to undertake jobs to improve their own locality: an African counterpart is to be seen in the Boys' Society in Freetown.

Role of intermediate technology.

But something far more fundamental is required for the rural situation that prevails for the greater part of Africa and Asia. An increasing number of governments are wondering whether the concept of Intermediate Technology may be relevant to their needs. Dr. Schumacher, Economic Adviser to the National Coal Board in Britain, has developed this concept out of disenchantment - born from his experience in Burma - with the impact of industrialisation on peasant life. This impact he feels, has brought despair to millions in developing countries, and disillusionment to many aid-giving nations. The growth of a dual economy results in a very modern sector, and a hinterland

of impoverishment. Then, says Schumacher in a vivid phrase, "the hinterland takes its revenge", for the unemployed swarm into the city and proliferate in the slums and shanty-towns, poisoning the city and making it unmanageable.

Putting men to work: not labour-saving machinery

The large-scale, capital-intensive mechanisms of the West bring havoc to the simpler economies and cultures of Africa and Asia. For every new job created by a modern factory, ten small jobs disappear elsewhere. But, argues Schumacher, if a product = capital + labour, then a decrease in capital means an increase in labour: the product remains the same. Philips, the great electronics firm, recently set up a special workshop in the Netherlands,* dispensing with the more automated processes of production in order to demonstrate how radios can be manufactured using hand-assembly and the kind of work-force so readily available in the East. It is this labour-intensive approach which is required in developing countries. We should be thinking, says Schumacher, in terms of hand-operated machinery, animal-drawn equipment, bicycle-trailers, water-catchment tanks, do-it-yourself kits, low-cost processing of skins and hides and so forth.

"Only the best is good enough for Africa" - Aggrey's famous phrase of the 1920s - can be tragically misinterpreted. For what is best is not necessarily what is foreign, it is what is most appropriate (Intermediate Technology is known in India as Appropriate Technology). Schumacher urges that:-

- (a) workplaces should be located where people are living at the time;
- (b) they should be working with local materials, for local use;
- (c) production should be simple, minimising the need for sophisticated skills;
- (d) methods should be cheap enough not to demand expensive, imported machinery.

* Specially located at Utrecht, without telephone installations, so that communications with the parent company at Eindhoven has to be by letter, as in developing countries.

Not two sectors - but shared sacrifice

It is the educational counterpart to this approach that we should be considering. Education and production must be linked, with schools in rural areas becoming half-classroom/half-farm, and in towns half-studies/half-workshop. Only thus can the alienation between learning and labour be avoided. Schumacher's conviction corresponds strikingly with President Nyerere's view, quoted by Patrick van Rensburg in his paper for this conference: "Every school should also be a farm... the school community should consist of both teachers and farmers, and pupils and farmers... the school members should learn that it is their farm and that their living standards depend on it". And both would agree in saying to the privileged few: "If society enables you to get an education, something so valuable and so much better than what most of your fellow countrymen can get, then you have to give something in return".

The trouble lies in the presence of the two sectors, one providing an 'inferior' kind of education, the other a 'superior' kind, as one of our conference papers puts it. Why should the young, or anyone else, for that matter, be prepared to accept a simple existence based on sweat, when, so visibly, others don't? Sacrifice becomes tolerable when it is shared by all: not when others - the 'Wa-Benzi'* - are seen to be enjoying the good things of life. A uniform condition of economic austerity and a unifying philosophy of self-reliance, such as prevail in Tanzania, may perhaps be pre-requisites.

What can our Open Society offer?

Does this mean that an Open Society, such as characterises Britain, has no contribution to make in this field? Here I am not so pessimistic. I do not wish to speak of all that goes by the name of 'participation' today; rather I would like to pinpoint a number of developments which suggest that we may be edging a little nearer to what might be regarded as a compassionate community.

In London S.E.1. the postmen are saying to the Welfare Departments in Southwark and Lewisham: "Taking round the letters we get to know who is in trouble. Would you like us to let you know where there are folk in need?" They have been followed by the dairymen, delivering milk to households, who have said: "Even without knocking on the door, we can tell by the way the bottles are set out whether something unusual is afoot". And in Leeds the men who enter houses to check the

* 'Wa-Benzi' - those driving about in Mercedes-Benz cars.

gas and electricity meters have likewise offered to inform the appropriate authorities when they find people in need of help. What is significant is that these men in the humblest forms of public service have suddenly realised that they are potentially in the front ranks of social workers.

The Army in Britain, now that there are proportionately more troops in the United Kingdom than at any time for over 150 years, is developing a programme of Military Aid to the Community ('Operation MAC'). The first soldier-volunteer to be released by the Ministry of Defence is now attached to my organisation. This Corporal/Carpenter is acting as a 'catalyst' or organiser, enabling groups of local young volunteers to make semi-derelict accommodation habitable for people urgently needing housing. In a sense he is the urban equivalent of the "animateurs" serving in the rural areas of French-speaking Africa. It is valuable training in leadership for the Corporal; good public relations for the Army; a service to the local community; and an encouragement to the young people of the neighbourhood. I have spoken earlier of Police Cadets helping those in need, as an integral part of their training. We need in every country to make all those in Government Service more sensitive in human relations and more aware of their responsibilities to the community.

Learning to give - as an integral part of education

I would not be so strong an advocate of relating education to the needs of society in Africa, did I not believe equally that in Britain our schooling must become less child-centred and more community-orientated. When I founded V.S.O. eleven years ago, it was to enable a few - a small elite - to make their contribution. In my present work we believe, as I have said, that any young person offering himself should have the opportunity of service. Now we want to take this development still a stage further, so that all young people have some experience of helping others, as a basic constituent of their education. In other words we aim to integrate community service with the curriculum.*

* See "Community Service & the Curriculum" (Schools Council Working Paper No.17), Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1968: "School in the Round" (Alec & Mora Dickson), Ward Lock Educational, London, 1969.

It is not easy to gain the acceptance of educationists for this thesis; it is harder still to work out the practical ways by which it can be implemented. "You have entered an era where you can no longer pay others to do your caring for you", we say to young people: and certainly the social problems facing us in the West - loneliness, race relations, boredom, drug dependence, delinquency - cannot be solved just by appointing professionals to tackle them. Yet the most difficult task is not to evoke a response from the young: indeed, a few days before my departure for this conference our National Union of Students, normally a thorn in the Government's side, urged the Secretary of State for Education to relate university and college syllabi to the service of the community. No, rather the problem is to persuade the authorities to take advantage of their offer. When we talk of the need for training, perhaps it is Government Departments which stand in need of guidance in how to see problems in terms of what people can do to solve them.

Service related to the Syllabus

Old people living alone in the West meet with accidents in their home from time to time. A fall, a seizure, a stroke renders them incapable of movement: and possibly it may not be for some days that they are found - dead. How could neighbours or passers-by be alerted in such instances? This was the problem that 14-15 year-old children and their teacher set themselves at a school in Lancashire this year. It was no good installing a handle or bell that required to be operated by the stricken person possibly unconscious: it had to function of its own accord, precisely because no action had been taken. After weeks of fruitless experimentation, with the movement of water in the pipes and other means, pupils and teacher realised that what they were seeking was available at any electrician's shop, namely a time-switch that could be set to sound an alarm after a predetermined passage of hours. But somehow the device had to be prevented automatically from working if, in the normal course of events, no accident occurred. What natural action undertaken in the course of an ordinary day by any householder would neutralise the appliance, thus preventing a false alarm? There followed months of further tests, using phenomena such as the opening and closing of doors. In October they had the answer: - every time the lavatory plug is pulled the arm of the time switch is returned to zero! When I left for this conference the Welfare Departments of both Manchester Corporation and Walkden Council were arranging to install pilot schemes.

The imaginative woman-teacher at that school does not call her subject 'Community Service' or 'Social Education'. For her it is Science, but applied to the needs which she knows are real to her pupils and the neighbourhood. The school itself has become an agent of change. Most of us have been told that 'education is preparation for life'. At that school they are not getting ready for life: they are living it here and now.