

PROBLEMS AFFECTING YOUTH

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1. A comprehensive analysis of the problems affecting the youth of the nation reveals that consideration should be given to a variety of factors, with each of which I will attempt to deal in turn.

Population growth

2. The "population explosion", the most important single factor in the rate of demographic growth, has been responsible for persons under twenty years old constituting about 55% of the population of this nation. With each succeeding year the number exceeds that of the preceding year.

3. Constantly growing numbers of children attain school-going age each year and the already inadequate capacity of the school system cannot be easily expanded to meet the increasing requirements.

Family Planning

4. The education programme of the Family Planning Unit needs to be more vibrant and realistic. Extra special attention must be given to rural areas, especially the outlying rural areas which are the ones most compromised. While the decision to participate or not must perforce rest with the individual, more direct and positive steps must be taken to reach such people who, because of their built-in defence-mechanisms, will never make the first move. The male of the species must also be part of the target population. Lectures, film shows and the like must be directed to youths in their late teens and early twenties.

5. Very soon, school places will have to be found for disadvantaged children who, for obvious reasons, will never be able to make full use of school places. They will surely become primary school drop-outs, to swell the every-increasing number of the unemployables.

6. Tobago, an island of villages, falls under this heading. The non-existence of any viable industries ready to absorb the

large number of school leavers, both primary and secondary, makes Tobago a more than special case for Family Planning attention.

7. It would be treading on dangerous grounds to introduce sex education in schools at the present moment although there is a crying need for such. This subject has been considered taboo for such a long time that it was impossible to get a body of teachers who could handle such an assignment with detached dexterity. However, steps are now being taken to correct such a drawback.

8. In the meantime, a series of pamphlets, in non-scientific down-to-earth language and dealing with the socio-economic aspects of Family Planning should be circulated to Youth Groups, Village Councils and other kindred associations.

9. Ignorance on the question of sex and its embarrassing implications has been responsible, in great measure, for compromising the future of many of our promising youths.

Youth Camps

10. The major institutions which are calculated to provide the panacea to unemployability are the Youth Camps and, to a lesser degree, the Trades Centres.

11. 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 county of St. Patrick, South Trinidad; covers an area of about 300 acres.
- (d) Chaguaramas - situated in the recently de-activated Naval Base on the north-western peninsula.

There are facilities in this camp to make it the biggest - numerically and otherwise.

Trade Skills

12. 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

13. Because of the facilities existing at Chaguaramas it is proposed to set up Television and Radio and Refrigeration shops.

Youth Unemployment

14. Against the background of the present youthful disenchantment and unrest owing, primarily, to lack of job opportunities, steps should be taken immediately to establish a "Community Youth Development Corporation", a Government sponsored agency, manned by a small staff.

15. The functions of this agency/corporation would be three-fold :-

- (a) to promote investment by the public and private enterprise in the Corporation, the primary aim of which is to provide funds to start business enterprises for youths, to make young businessmen.
- (b) to advise on viability of specific enterprises and to provide information on current investment opportunities and prospects for small business in the country.
- (c) to attract and receive sums of money to be donated to, or invested in, the corporation for the purpose of promoting business or entrepreneurial opportunities for the youth of the country.

16. The staff should comprise :-

- (a) a Managing Director, who must be a graduate

in business management with some considerable knowledge of local conditions.

- (b) an Executive Secretary who should be an accountant at the level of Assistant Secretary in the Civil Service.
- (c) an Assistant Secretary, at the level of Administrative Assistant in the Civil Service - a sociologist, psychologist or other social scientist, very dynamic and having previous experience in Community or Youth Development, who should be capable of performing as a career guidance officer, as well as assisting with the processing of applicants' cases.
- (d) Clerical staff comprising two clerks and one filing clerk.

17. For the project, Government should seek aid from technical assistance bodies, notably the Pan American Federation of the O.A.S.

18. The Corporation should have from Government a grant in the neighbourhood of TT. \$50,000 in the first year, together with what may be donated by the private companies.

19. The number of loans should be limited during each year and the areas of enterprise should be to some extent guided both by intimations given in the Five Year Plan and by frequent regular checks on the economic and social trends. Farming should not be excluded from the area of enterprises to be encouraged.

20. The young people should benefit greatly from the dialogue which would obtain in the scheme calculated to cater specifically to their major needs. Those who would gain directly from these loans to set up in business would not be a majority, for among other reasons not everyone possesses the aptitude or the desire to be his own employer.

21. It is envisaged that arising out of the establishment of this particular type of source of credit and advice, co-operative societies of young people with combinations of skills and interests would be welded together in single enterprises etc.

22. Many schemes would have to be rejected, but the young people would learn as a result what is involved. This proposal is made in the knowledge that the youth of the country regard their prospects for development as tied in with their position in the economic and social strata of the society and with opportunity for upward mobility.

23. The opportunity afforded them of interaction with this agency with its highly trained staff and the nature of the service should have the direct result of nurturing confidence in prospects for business in and among a section of the nation which would otherwise have little opportunity of earning or owning a stake in the productive sector of the economy.

Vocational and technical training

24. The transition from a plantation economy to one that is becoming more and more industrially viable has greatly underscored the fact that we are sadly wanting in the matter of a constant supply of competent technical skills necessary to meet such a demanding change.

25. Training, adapted to economic and social perspectives, must embrace vocational and technical training, in the first instance, and training in leadership and civic responsibility, in the second.

26. Technical training, within the context of the nation's needs, must be considered under two heads:-

(a) Training for trainees

(b) Training for instructors who will eventually train the trainees.

27. Technical training for the vast number of unemployable and therefore unemployed, disadvantaged youths, is the only answer to this untenable situation.

Major Considerations

28. There is a most urgent need for a clear-cut, well-defined programme of training to embrace both areas of training. This need is greatly accentuated by the following major considerations:-

(a) The traditional grammar-school type of education -

Cambridge and London Universities - based - has been found to be no fit preparation for the progressively demanding industrial climate. A white-collar job was the goal of all such graduates. They did not want to "soil their hands". No blue collar work for them!

- (b) The existing Technical Institutes can accommodate only so many. This total enrolment is just "a drop in the bucket" in relation to the ever-increasing numbers seeking admission. The setting up of more such institutions or, for that matter, extending the operations of the existing ones, is now given top priority consideration.
- (c) A high degree of technical skill is really no guarantee of capacity to instruct.
- (d) The mass exodus of skilled tradesmen to the more attractive industrial countries has not only threatened to leave this country industrially indefensible, but has unwittingly deprived us of any possible reservoir of competence which, in an emergency, could be co-opted into the field of instructors.
- (e) The system of apprenticeship, which did so much good in the past, has of late been confined only to the major industrial concerns, who consider this an imperative since it is self-perpetuating in intention. This should be revived with greater vigour. Each industrial concern should be committed to accept a number of apprentices in a fixed ratio to their personnel and volume of business.
- (f) Despite the much-publicised drain of industrial skills and the dearth of competent trade instructors, it is thought-provoking that up to now there is not even the semblance of a programme for training trades instructors.
- (g) In order that the proposed extended Youth Camp programme and the new Trades Centres project may attain some measure of viability, it is

imperative that there be a ready supply of competent trade instructors.

- (h) Such a programme of training for instructors would obviate the necessity of requesting assistance of this nature from other countries.
- (i) The nation's man-power requirements point to a greatly increased demand on these occupations requiring technical training. This suggests that the gap between the man-power needs of industry and the skills of the work-force will continue to widen in the absence of decisive remedial action.
- (j) Set against the background of the lack of technical skills in the region and the burgeoning needs of industry for such skills, plans should 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 the economic life of South-East Asia.

The Thailand Approach

29. Against the background of technical training, it is interesting to note that Thailand has started a trend which bids fair to be copied by other developing countries.

30. In effect, this is the result of an agreement between the Philco-Ford Corporation and the Student Department of the Royal Thai Embassy in the United States.

31. This provides for technical training and industrial work experience during twelve months for fifty-one Thai teachers in the United States in the following areas:

Electrical Trades - seventeen teachers

Electronic (radio and T.V.) - seventeen teachers

Automotive trades - seventeen teachers

32. Upon the successful termination of this course, all Thai teachers must return to Thailand to take up positions as trades instructors in Youth Camps, Trades Schools or kindred institutions for a period of time specified by the Government.

33. The Thai approach would be too costly for us to follow. One cannot, however, lose sight of the fact that this approach spells out, in clear tones, an urgent awareness of the great demand for technical training.

34. Some twenty or so trades instructors have been recently appointed to duty in the existing camps, but with the proposed extended programme there will be need for many more.

Obligatory Participation

35. A possible solution to our problems as to the quality and, quantity of trades instructors for the Youth Camps and Trades Centres is what could be referred to as "obligatory participation" as practised by many of the developing countries of the world - Africa, South East Asia etc.

36. In these countries, there is the understanding that graduates from technical institutes, especially those who have an aptitude for imparting knowledge, must spend a specified time in some "hardship area" - Youth Camps, rural schools or any other Government controlled institutions which have difficulty in recruiting personnel.

37. In this way, the institutions concerned are assured of a full complement of competent instructors in the various trades.

38. The education policy obtaining in Trinidad and Tobago has such a proviso, whereby all graduates from Government-run Training Colleges and Universities are committed to serve in primary and secondary schools throughout the territory for a contracted period of time, before they are tempted to move on to greener pastures.

39. This contributes to the educational development of the nation while at the same time affording an opportunity to graduates to express their appreciation of training received at the expense of the taxpayer.

40. The Ministry of Education could be approached to have such a policy extended to involve the Technical Institutes. Too

often these people are ready to shake the dust of the institute off their feet, without a thought of returning in kind some sizeable token for benefits received. Their approach is too individual, too personal, too selfish. Obligatory participation should be the operative principle.

Another Possible Solution

41. Another possible solution might be found in the industrial sector itself. Persons with knowledge of "work practice" and industrial experience with co-workers and subordinates are better prepared to provide the under privileged youth with vocational instruction than persons with knowledge of teaching theory and curriculum.

42. Some arrangement should be affected between Government and the industrial sector in two areas:-

- (a) Foremen, or very experienced workers with communication skills, who are attached to industries having no apprentice-training programme, could be released for a specified period - one year or so - to do service in Youth Camps or Trades Centres.
- (b) Industries which boast of vocational training programmes offer such "on-the-job" work practice. One or two of the outstanding graduates who have the necessary communication skills would be released for a specified time for such duties.

43. The question of salary could be approached in any one of these ways:-

- (a) The industry concerned might consider this gesture as a contribution towards the programme and pay the salary of the person under consideration.
- (b) Government might pay the stipulated salary of the post, with the industry concerned meeting the difference if the workers' salary is more than that of the post.

Respect for Trades Skills

44. It is high time we put an end to the "catch-as-catch-can" approach to trades shops' instruction while we continue to spend million of dollars setting up schools and placing training for teachers on the high-priority list, as it should be.

45. If we are to be industrially viable, we need to turn out a constant supply of graduates from technical institutes, many of whom are not only proficient in the various skills, but who have also been trained in the techniques of imparting such knowledge to the many thousands of youths who are hungry for such instruction.

46. They must know that they are being trained to operate as instructors and, as such, must be involved with what might be termed "instructor awareness".

47. They would be sent to youth camps and trades centres in much the same way as hundreds of training college students; even those finishing studies at the University of the West Indies know that they will be posted, at the beginning of the school year, to primary and secondary schools to teach the school population.

48. Technical training for youth must be accorded the same respect and dignity as formal education. It must be concentrated and programmed, and not looked upon as a dumping ground for educational failures and frustrated tradesmen looking for some measure of security.

49. A programme of this sort would surely bring a new dimension to the graduates of the technical institutes - a sense of involvement in promoting the industrial development of the nation.

Agriculture

50. The dominance of the oil industry notwithstanding, agriculture is, and will continue to be, the backbone of this nation's economy and all youth camps for boys will, therefore, be agriculturally oriented in both crop husbandry (ground provisions and green vegetables) and animal husbandry (pig and poultry rearing and dairy farming).

51. The phased development of all camps will have as its goal the total cultivation of camp acreage. This will not be less

than one hundred acres in extent in any camp. Self-sufficiency is the desired end-result.

Agricultural Officers

52. Every National Youth Camp must have on its staff an Agricultural Officer who shall be mainly responsible for initiating and implementing the agricultural programme of the camp.

53. Full-time Agricultural Officers are the only people comparable to the Trade Instructors, who are also full time. The too infrequent visits of Agricultural Extension Officers give the lie to the expressed concern of the Ministry of Agriculture for the agricultural development of the National Youth Camps.

Rural Youth Development

54. The Ministry of Agriculture should be encouraged to pursue and extend their laudable project of having selected youths who are agriculture-oriented engage in co-operative farming on large areas of arable land in far rural areas as is soon to be started in the county of St. Andrew.

55. Every county should boast at least one such project if suitable land is available.

56. All technical assistance, including feasibility studies, land capability tests, topographical surveys, extension services, will be undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture.

57. The success of such a project would be greatly underscored if the selectees were first to undergo a rigid two or three months induction course either at one of the suitable Youth Camps or in some government-controlled farming project.

There they be given lectures on the practical aspects of farming in all its areas, taken on field trips, given assignment and chores etc. This would prepare them to face the challenge of the project to be undertaken.

4H Clubs

58. The recently-launched 4H Young Farmers Club under the umbrella of the Ministry of Agriculture has as its chief term of reference the development of rural youth and could offer assistance in this respect.

Urban and Rural Imbalance

59. Rural development, within the context of the problems of the nations youth who, for one reason or other, are displaying a marked disinclination to go back to the land, cannot be equated with development only in agriculture, the chief area of emphasis in rural areas.

60. While it is desirable that those engaged in agriculture should be assisted in all technical details relevant to agriculture in order to ensure maximum productivity therefrom, it should be the responsibility of Government to help in the promotion of diversified rural industries which will serve the purpose of supplying a wide range of simple producer and consumer articles.

61. This is an effective tool in inducing a faster rate of creating employment opportunities for the increasing number of rural unemployed, with special reference to the youth sector.

62. Against this background, efforts will be exerted towards the establishment of a Rural Industries Scheme which should result in bringing together statutory and voluntary interests to work for the improvement of life in rural areas.

63. A Rural Industries Corporation, which could be an adjunct to the existing Industrial Development Corporation, should be set up. This Corporation should be in a position to provide the following services:-

- (a) advice and information on technical business, financial and marketing problems;
- (b) technical instruction and training where suitable facilities are not provided by Education Authorities;
- (c) technical publications;
- (d) experimental and testing work;
- (e) technical advice and information to the Rural Industries Workshop and Equipment and Workshop Loan Fund.
- (f) publicity - an expanding programme of exhibitions throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

64. These services should be provided by a field staff of itinerant technicians and advisers who should work in close collaboration with secondary voluntary organisations, such as the Country Association of Youth Groups, the Association of Village Councils, etc.

65. Priority should be given to the following categories of rural industries:-

(a) those which provide a service to or are ancillary to agriculture;

(b) those village industries which help the export drive, directly or indirectly.

66. Some of the schemes in rural industrialisation include the following products: furniture, timber, wines, liquors, pre-fabricated building components, handicraft workshops, food processing and canning plants, etc. The raw materials for these schemes are easily obtainable in the country.

67. Technical assistance should also be sought from the International Labour Organisation in the establishment of this scheme.

68. The Industrial Development Corporation should be encouraged to extend its programme of setting up industrial estates in other rural areas as it has been doing in Trincity and in the environs of Arima.

69. It would be necessary for the Industrial Development Corporation to offer powerful incentives to entrepreneurs if this is to be a viable scheme. The benefits accruing to human dignity and involvement would be compensation enough.

70. This would more than help to offset the spiralling social problem of urbanization, especially as it relates to the unemployed rural youth who has to choose one of two embarrassing alternatives: migrating to the city to swell the army of the unemployed, or remaining at home, resigned to the futility of trying to improve his lot - a woeful waste of human resources and a very visible social problem.

Drug Addiction

71. Over the past three or four years, there has been a

growing wave of drug usage, especially of marijuana. We have been fortunate, so far, in the fact that there is no problem with "hard-core" drugs.

72. Certain recent incidents which were given undue press publicity have clearly demonstrated the fact that youths are the most vulnerable section of the community, and many are the reasons given for this situation.

73. Up to now there has been, however, no attempt at formulating a preventive approach to the "problem". Reaction by the limbs of the law has been the one measure adopted, and prosecution for possession or cultivation is the only answer.

74. There should be a programme of education calculated to highlight the injurious effect of drug usage. There should be a battery of competent lecturers, comprising medical men, teachers, the police and other kindred voluntary workers, to go around from school to school on such an important mission.

75. Films showing the evils of drug addiction could be easily obtained from foreign film companies. They are quite well-suited to the local youthful audience.

Lack of recreation facilities

76. A common complaint of nearly all youth groups and, for that matter, County Associations of Youth Groups, is the lack of recreational facilities - in most cases, both indoor and outdoor.

77. Even in areas boasting youth centres, the lack of proper programming is sometimes responsible for much of the confusion which robs recreation of its true value.

78. In some Village Council-dominated Community Centres, indoor recreation is, more often than not, looked upon as a nuisance which must give place to Women's Group meetings, handicraft classes, etc.

79. Outdoor recreation is an even greater problem, since the lack of playing fields robs the youngsters of opportunity to participate in the popular outdoor games which are held dear in the hearts of all young people - cricket, football, basketball and even athletics. They do not, therefore, develop their true potential.

80. Notwithstanding the fact that recreation grounds just do not appear out of thin air, it should be the aim to provide every village with a ground for the playing of such games. The Ministry of Local Government, the competent authority, should be so appraised.

81. Every County should boast a relevant County Sports Association, responsible for all aspects of sport in the individual county. The Division of Sports, I am sure, could give some information on this matter.

Placement of youths

82. The post-graduation activities of Youth Camp trainees have always been an area of weakness in this programme. The soon-to-be established Placement Service of the Division of Youth Affairs is calculated to effect some improvement in this respect.

83. The Placement Service constitutes an integral aspect of the Youth Service since in the final analysis the crucial test of the efficacy of the training programmes carried out in the Youth Camps and Trade Centres will be the degree to which the Service succeeds in securing placements for graduates.

84. The Placement Service does not guarantee job opportunities for graduates; they must, therefore, always be prepared, in keeping with the Camps' philosophy of self-reliance, to exert every conceivable effort to find suitable available employment.

Yardstick of success

85. The success of the Youth Camp training programme will be reflected in the disposition of the employers to accept the graduates as capable tradesmen. The quality and intensity of trade instruction and the work experience gained by trainees will naturally be the determining factors in such a situation.

86. The National Youth Camp Certificate, which lists all the trades in which the trainee was involved, must raise questions as to the capacity of the trainee to be competent in any one of such trades. This certificate must be replaced by one which would be acceptable to employers and specifying only one trade, as the Assistant Craftsman Certificate set by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Youth Camp facilities for girls

87. The El Dorado Youth Camp will be constructed to accommodate 300 young ladies in the age group range 14-24 who, not having had the benefit of formal training apart from that obtained at primary school, have little prospect of employment or successful career, unless further training is possible.

88. The programme of education and training at the Camp has been planned with due reference to the needs identifiable from the social and economic trends in the country.

89. The activities of this camp will be as follows:-

- Handicraft
- Dressmaking
- Leather work and upholstery
- Bookbinding
- Typing and Shorthand
- Elementary Book-keeping
- Beauty Culture
- Housekeeping
- Home Nursing etc.

90. Although the girls will be housed from the start in a properly constructed building, it is intended that they should assist in enhancing the Camp by horticultural projects and agricultural activities. Camp life should inculcate in them a measure of community spirit and responsibility, and a thoroughly planned programme of suitable education will aim at ensuring both a broad general education for living and skill in two or more areas.

91. The period of eighteen months spent in the Camp is intended to add to their personal store of knowledge and at the same time to increase their earning power.

92. In the El Dorado Girls' Camp a new type of education for girls will be started; it will have a cultural flavour and will be shaped by an appreciation of the realities of our own society. It is also intended to have day-time non-residential training for young women between the ages of 19 and 23 who are in need of some training to gain employment. Special consideration has been given here to provision for single women of this age group who have one or two children and need some measure of financial independence.

The communication gap between industry and the underprivileged

93. The commercial and industrial sector of the Caribbean Commonwealth must be fully aware of the fact that recent events in the region, precipitated by the mood and temper of the time and the rising expectations of the under-privileged, must, perforce, result in a complete re-appraisal of what could aptly be called the era of "glorified detachment" from the social ills of the community on their part. This detachment was the hallmark of an extractive, reactive and punitive colonialism.

94. The non-governmental sectors should not have to be told that their social responsibility to the community in which they operate is more, much more, than merely writing cheques or giving token support to secondary organisations. Greater involvement and honest commitment are the sorely needed components in such a setting. The longer employers remain uninvolved in improving their communities in every area of living, the more disadvantaged they become in competing for and attracting the kind of employees they need in order to remain profitable.

Profile of the disadvantaged

95. A conspiracy of circumstances has somehow been responsible for creating and promoting in industrial and commercial employers a feeling of suspicion and apprehension in the matter of placing the people from multi-problem areas on their payroll. Disadvantaged youths are thus heavily compromised.

96. The profile of disadvantaged youth typically shows that they are not reliable, are frequently late for work and absent without explanation, that they dress poorly and out of context, and lack personal hygiene. It reveals that they are impulsive, hostile and unfriendly to co-workers; are not temperate in their language; are reluctant to accept or profit by supervision or criticism; are time-wasting in their work activities; are not interested or motivated to train for job skills in order to improve their occupational mobility and are not disposed to go job-hunting. They are often resigned to the finality of their position and to the futility of striving to improve such positions.

97. Notwithstanding this, many employers have learned that:

- (a) most disadvantaged youngsters, when given the opportunity to work, really want to work;

- (b) most disadvantaged youths who are unemployed are employable;
- (c) most of the untrained disadvantaged youths are trainable;
- (d) most uneducated people are educable.

Good work habits

98. The gratuitous hiring of a few hands should not be the extent to which employers are only prepared to go. Where possible, pre-work orientation, supportive counselling and continued follow-through on the job are very necessary to turn some of the "disadvantaged" into good employees.

99. The important elements of pre-training should include such areas as grooming and hygiene, money management, job-preparation and human relations.

100. Where Management has become involved in hiring and training, it must be stressed that the learning of **good working habits** is even more important than the actual learning of a specific skill. This should be even more emphasized in the case of Youth Camp training.