YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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The African continent is a very large land area. The whole of Africa contains something over 310 million people, of whom Commonwealth Africa has well over one hundred million. Of these some 65 millions are in Nigeria. You may ask what is the relevance of countries and population of this dimension to the situation in Malta.

I would say two things. First of all, the Island of Mauritius, which we included in Africa for this purpose even though it is really an Indian Ocean country, has a great deal in common with you in that it is a relatively small island, it is densely populated, and it has a very severe problem of unemployment; something like one young person in five leaving school in Mauritius can look forward to a wage earning job. Secondly, the pattern of development in Africa has quite a lot in common with your situation. The towns in Africa are growing very rapidly. While the overall population is increasing at perhaps 2% to 3% a year, the urban population is increasing at anything up to 10% a year; the city of Accra in Ghana, for example, has trebled in size in the last ten years. This urban drift gives rise to all sorts of problems, not unknown in Malta, of families breaking down, social structures breaking down, young people looking for work and not finding it - as Dr Maraj was saying earlier, taking their school certificates into the city and finding nobody who is prepared to buy them. These problems are not unknown in Malta. As the populations are increasing (and I realise that this is not a problem of Malta at the moment) as the populations are increasing so rapidly in Africa they are also becoming younger. What is happening is not a great increase in the birth rate, it is just that the children who are born are staying alive. Where twenty years ago anything up to eight children out of ten were dead before they were five, now they are staying alive and it is this that is producing an unbalanced sort of population where perhaps 60%, six out of ten of the population, are under the age of twenty-five and in some countries one person in four is under the age of five. This results in an immediate problem that heads of households have more people dependent on them. Everybody who is earning a wage has more people to keep. Population increase presents problems for governments, too, because more people need more schools,

the great forces of change at work in the world today, we may find ourselves like the Shafter cow, swallowed up by vast upheavals in our way of life - quite early some morning".

And so when we went to the African Seminar we were looking at the sort of world that you will inherit and what we could do to make it satisfying, rewarding and enjoyable. We looked at the school system first of all and wondered whether schools are doing the job that they think they are doing and that they were set up to do. We asked ourselves whether we must go on in the same old way. At present we take a child into a classroom at six and turn him out at sixteen or eighteen, and we say to him, "You are educated". But consider: 80% of all the scientists who have ever lived are alive today. In present circumstances, when change is so rapid, when the increase in the volume of knowledge is so rapid, can we honestly say that a young person leaving school at sixteen can go to work for the next fifty years and still be a full member of his community, aware of what is going on, responsive to change, able to contribute? May it not be that we are reaching the stage when education must be a much longer process than that given by the school? May it not be that we are going to have to look much more closely at a system which will give a child first the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, then an initial vocational training, and then more education, more training, re-training, education for leisure, education for retirement? People are living longer. If you retire at sixty or sixty-five and you still have fifteen years to live, what do you do with them? No present system educates for the end of life as it does for the beginning.

So we looked at educational systems. If you are going to have a changed educational system somebody is going to have to pay for it. How are we going to finance it? Is it going to be the central government, is it going to be fees, is it going to be local government? Are we going to have to move some money out of formal school education into the out of school sector? What about all the commercial firms conducting their separate training schemes, the apprentices, the in-service training, the "sitting-by-Nellie" learning on the job? Is this not part of education, should it not be brought into the national framework? Education, as people are saying now, is more than schooling and it does seem that the whole complex of everything which is going on in the form of education and training should be considered as a whole. As I said a little earlier, how do we know that the systems that are in force are doing the job that they think they are doing, however conscientiously they tackle it?

they need more dispensaries, more hospitals, more roads, more houses, and they need them now because the youngsters are there. The question of population growth and population balance, therefore, is a very severe one for many countries in Africa.

What is also happening is that within countries and between countries the gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider. The Pearson Report, "Partners in Development", which was published in 1970, right at the beginning quotes a United Nations report: "It is a tragic fact that at the end of the 1960s there are more sick, more undernourished and more uneducated children in the world than there were ten years ago". We are rather like the White Queen in "Alice in Wonderland"; we are running to stay in the same place.

This is producing problems that are not intrinsically youth problems, they are problems of development, they are political problems, social problems, economic problems. They cannot be solved by building a sports field, giving young people a football and telling them to keep out of trouble. And these problems now are beginning to affect the rich countries as well. Where only a year ago, or a year or two ago, there was a general implication that the rich countries - and in Commonwealth terms that is Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand - knew the answers, now of course they are realising that they don't. Britain is now facing graduate unemployment, Canada now has 6% unemployed and for the first time the countries that have developed, that have industrialised, are facing the same sort of problem that the poorer countries have known about for fifteen years. We are all now in the same boat.

You may have seen quite recently two publications, one called "Blueprint for Survival" and the other, "Limits to Growth". They are saying, basically, that up until now everybody has thought that their problems would be solved if they industrialised, mechanised, became more sophisticated. If we all became more affluent, everything would be fine. But in fact it is not so. Industrialisation is not solving the problems of developing countries. You have a situation in Ghana, for example, where something over twenty million pounds was put into an aluminium smelter and fewer than two thousand people get jobs out of it. Capital intensive industry, that is, industry using expensive machinery, is not proving to be the answer. There is now a lot of work going on to introduce what is being called "intermediate technology", that is machinery that makes the maximum use of people, because what we have in the world

at the moment is people, and it is no good increasing your productivity if it means that fewer people are going to be employed.

There is a tremendous problem, an increasing problem, arising from our growth in terms of pollution. The United States is at the moment terribly worried about the effects of pollution. Lake Erie, the largest of the Great Lakes, is claimed to be dying - if not dead - because of the chemicals and other pollutants that are being poured into it, and we are only just beginning to appreciate that if we live, as it is now being called, on "Space Ship Earth" then we have a limited amount of material to use up and if we are going to husband it and make the best of it and leave it to the next generation then we are going to have to be much more discriminating than we have been in the past.

There seems to be nothing we can now do to prevent the world population doubling between now and the year two thousand. Where there are three thousand eight hundred million people in the world now there will be seven thousand million in the year 2000 - an awful lot of people. But they will be younger people and they, too, will be having families and the world is going to have a much greater population by the year 2100. Many of you who are sitting here now will not expect to retire from work until the year 2000. We are not talking about our grand-children, we are talking about you. You are going to live in a world where there are seven thousand million people. What are you going to do with it? One of the resources that we are short of and the resource that we waste most of, is time. We have not a lot of time. Let me read a quotation which we included in our report "Youth and Development in the Caribbean" and which conveys vividly the idea that time is of the essence:

"At exactly 5.13 a.m. on the 18th April 1906 a cow was standing somewhere between the main barn and the milking shed on the old Shafter Ranch in California, minding her own business. Suddenly the earth shook, the skies trembled, and when it was all over, nothing remained of the cow above ground but a bit of her tail sticking up. For the student of change, the Shafter cow is a sort of symbol of our times. She stood quietly enough, having such gentle thoughts as cows are likely to have, while huge forces outside her ken built up all around her and, within a minute, discharged all at once in a great movement that changed the configuration of the earth and destroyed a city and swallowed her up. If we do not learn to understand and guide

If we have, as we have, sixty thousand unemployed graduate engineers in India; if we have, as we have, 30% of young people unemployed in Trinidad; if we have, as we have, an increasing unemployment of graduates in Britain, are we using our country's resources to the best advantage, and, if not, what are we going to do about it? Ten years ago there was a great vogue for the phrase "Investment in Education". The line then was that education is an economic investment; you invest in a young person, you spend money on his education and in the long run the country benefits because he is an intelligent, able, and skilled person who can be employed and generally augment the national wealth. It is not happening. What in fact is happening in a number of countries, developing countries, is that we are educating for unemployment, and how can you say that education is an investment when the people in whom you are investing are not able to make their return? Even the World Bank last September abandoned the idea of investment in education as an incontrovertible concept. They now admit that we simply don't know what the return is on education, because the economy of many countries is not developing as fast as the education system which is designed to serve it.

I have not come here with an answer and neither did the African Seminar reach one. We can not, therefore, say, "Do this and this and this", but we can say that there are some assumptions which have been made over the last ten years that are simply not being borne out by events. What was thought very important in the African context was the need to try to measure the success of what is being done. In order to do that we have to develop measuring instruments, to determine, for example, how successful have schools been. The other very important aspects that came up in the African Seminar was the need for educated young people to become actively involved in the development of their communities. People like yourselves who are selected for secondary education, who are selected for university education, are a very small proportion of the whole. You are using resources, you are using communal finance, and, while it may be very well to go away and get a Ph.D in Sanscrit or whatever, this is using national resources to individual benefit. How far should university students and secondary school students have their courses aligned to community service? How far can the higher levels of education serve the individual's interest along?

In one Commonwealth country, for example, there is a social service scheme whereby every university student builds

up credits towards his degree by involving himself in his community for a given number of hours a week, by teaching literacy, by helping the handicapped and in various other ways. How far can the university, and indeed all third-level education, how far can the university remain aloof from the community and how far should it be an instrument of development?

The African Seminar was particularly concerned that girls and women should not be considered as less deserving of consideration than the men. Emancipation may bring its own problems, for example, the problem that perhaps the girl gets a job, the man does not, so that a man might become dependent on his wife for his income. This presents a sensitive and difficult situation. There is also the problem that working wives may mean children put at risk because their mother is not at home when the child comes home from school; the problem of the "latch-key child" is well-known in Britain.

Finally, the African Seminar was particularly concerned that problems concerning young people (that is, anybody up to about 25 years old), should be recognised by governments as being not only the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture but the concern of a whole range of Ministries and departments working in the areas of agriculture, commerce and industry, economic planning, education, information, labour, and social welfare.