
INTRODUCTION

The decade from the late sixties has witnessed an increasing interest on the part of governments in the field of youth policy. As more and more governments delve deeper into the complexities of this area of social policy so the problems, if not the solutions, become more clearly identified.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme arose out of the concerns expressed in the late sixties. It began its work in 1973 and through the creation of three Regional Centres it has already made a significant contribution to the provision of trained youth administrators and field workers. It has done less in helping Commonwealth countries to find solutions to the policy problems which confront them.

There are, of course, limits to the extent to which measures appropriate for one social and political structure can be applied to another. However, the Commonwealth approach is to look, listen and learn from each other's experiences. The CYP is able to facilitate this process by exchanging information on youth policy initiatives and this is done particularly through its regular News Service publications.

In addition, the CYP can act as a broker of effective policy practices by holding meetings on specific policy aspects of youth work. By the beginning of 1979 several of these had been run under the auspices of the Programme at the regional or national levels and a pan-Commonwealth meeting of Young Leaders had also been held. But there had been no meeting on a pan-Commonwealth basis to explore the basic principles involved in the development of national youth policies.

The meeting scheduled for 9 to 13 March 1979 in Chandigarh, India, was designed to remedy that deficiency.

The Commonwealth Meeting on Government Policy on Youth Affairs was attended by 50 representatives of 26 Commonwealth countries - including ministers and senior officials. It was opened on the morning of 9 March by the President of India. This was followed by a key-note address by the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

Working sessions began that afternoon, with discussions ranging across the broad spectrum of government policy on youth affairs, facilitated by five major presentations. Mr. P. Sabanayagam, Secretary of the Indian Ministry of Education, Social Welfare and Culture, delivered a paper dealing with the areas involved in formulating national youth policies. Mr. P. Mandelson, Chairman of the British Youth Council, delivered a paper on national youth policy from the

perspective of young people in industrialised Commonwealth countries. Professor Douglas Hall of the University of the West Indies delivered a paper on national youth policy in the Caribbean context. He introduced his paper as a layman and independent observer of comparative Caribbean approaches to youth policy and community development.

The fourth paper was delivered by participants of the Commonwealth Diploma Course in Youth and Development at the Commonwealth Youth Programme's Asia-Pacific Centre in Chandigarh. This attempted a comprehensive overview of youth policy, as seen by young practitioners, many of whom had already accumulated experience as middle-level youth workers and departmental officers in their home countries. As part of their studies all course participants had been required to contribute their individual opinions; these had been fashioned into a collective statement by an elected editorial committee with the assistance of the Centre's senior tutor. The course participants were invited to take part in the Meeting as a whole, thus adding to the pan-Commonwealth approach to discussion.

As a summary of these four papers and the discussion they generated, the Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General, Professor K.S. Murshid, delivered the final presentation as a guide towards the Meeting's final agreed statement on government policy on youth affairs.

Chairmen for the various sessions were selected from among those present. They included Professor Murshid, Mr. Sabanayagam, Dr. Z. Onyanka of Kenya and Mr. T. Sandiford of Guyana.