
RECORD OF DISCUSSIONS

1. International and Historical Constraints

In his paper, Professor Hall criticised youth policies which amounted to nothing more than ad hoc, short-term "rescue" operations. His point was well taken by delegates. Some stressed, however, historical reasons why this had been so. They said that temporary "rescue" measures had been unavoidable in the post-independence period, because of colonial conditioning. "Historically, we were lead to believe that, once capital resources had been harnessed, development would follow." An emphasis on capital resource accumulation had meant little attention to manpower resource development.

Such an emphasis was compounded by the international economic situation. Delegates referred to the North/South Dialogue and the search for a New International Economic Order. But what had the search produced? "Year after year, conferences and meetings are held and, year after year, promises are made." Apparently to little effect, since governments continued to lack funds to develop human resources and to provide long-term, coherent policies for youth. Delegates were reminded of Professor Hall's quote from Bob Marley about the "rat-race" of daily life, in which youth policy had suffered.

Nor was youth policy alone, as one delegate pointed out. "Our experiences of youth policy are typical also of so many experiences we have had in other areas of development policy. Very limited resources have been a major constraint."

The need to turn away from emphasis on capital resource accumulation to human resource development was advanced by some delegates. "Political infra-structure," moreover, "is required to mobilise for a national development that will last from one generation to the next....a change is required in our national values."

Such change saw human resource development and community services as the "core element in national development policy".

2. Youth Policy and National Experience

While delegates saw common historical and international constraints on successful development of youth policy, they agreed particularly that no single blueprint for a youth policy could be formulated. Within countries there were, notwithstanding shared constraints, vast differences in social cultural and political backgrounds.

This point was made very strongly, both in the opening discussion following Mr. Sabanayagam's presentation, and in

the extended period of free discussion before Professor Murshid's summary. Reference was made to the President of India's opening address:

"The youth policy of every country should grow out of the experience of that country and it should be consistent with its social and economic goals. It should provide a firm basis for the development of youth and its participation in society."

Delegates strove, therefore, to reach broad consensus on principal issues. They recognised the long standing interest of the Commonwealth Youth Programme, at the behest of Commonwealth governments, in the development of youth affairs, and recognised that their own responsibility lay in "percolating" agreed ideas and principles back to those in authority in their own countries for application in national terms.

3. The Gravity of the Problems facing Youth

In agreeing such a general approach, however, delegates recognised the particular problems that young people were facing, and that these problems were expanding. Professor Hall reminded the Meeting that, in Jamaica, of 40,000 secondary school leavers only 10,000 would find employment. What did the future hold for these young people? They were idealistic, had expectations, were not politicians. The young could well turn their idealism and energies to overturning a system which they felt neglected them.

This point was returned to later in the Meeting, when one delegate commented: "We should not underestimate youth. Youth have changed governments. They have even changed military governments."

Some delegates felt that an order of priorities was required. It was impossible to solve all problems. Crucial areas should be identified, priorities within them allocated, and work loads assigned.

Professor Hall's concern for youth unemployment as a crucial area was shared by the Chandigarh Diploma Course participants. They argued that special attention required to be given to those who were in "the most effective stage of working life". In the course of economic regeneration in each Commonwealth country this would seem a natural proposition.

4. Two Major Lines of Debate

Whether or not it was a natural proposition was extensively debated. Some delegates felt that the young were more imperilled by the rigours of development than other sections of society. They indicated, for instance, the urban drift in many Commonwealth countries - where destitution in rural areas had forced huge groups of predominantly young people to attempt an often fruitless migration to the cities in search of employment.

Delegates recalled earlier Commonwealth agreement at the 1978 Commonwealth Youth Affairs Council in Ottawa, that programmes for youth would have a more significant impact if designed as part of an overall youth policy in each country.

Should such a youth policy, however, be distinct from other policies to do with national development, or be a part of them? Those delegates who supported a distinct youth policy referred to the need of a nation to harness the energies of youth; they argued that the young seemed to lack commitment in nations without a specific youth policy; nations without a youth policy were able to channel provision for youth only to a small section of young people at large. They further argued that a specific youth policy was an ideal means of ensuring that the voice of youth was heard and that it carried influence in shaping policy.

These delegates did not advocate that a youth policy should be formed in isolation of other policies for national development; they agreed that, while specific, youth policy should be carefully related to other policies.

The essential difference between the two lines of debate was the degree of relationship deemed necessary. The second line of thought considered that development should be considered in its totality. Youth policy was one branch of this totality; youth policy derived from it and did not stand in special relationship to it.

The division was expressed by the delegate from Guyana, who characterised the choice as "either a policy for youth, or a policy in which youth can be participants". The delegate from Sierra Leone found it "very difficult to divorce a youth policy from an overall national policy for development". The delegate from Tanzania also stated his views clearly: "Youth form part of an integrated sum total of the political, social and economic setup of a particular nation. They must not be isolated from the many aspects which are part and parcel of national development."

One delegate did observe, however, that the call for a specific, separate youth policy might well arise from the failure of other national policies to improve the plight of the young.

5. Objectives of Youth Policy

After much discussion along these lines, delegates felt that common objectives were involved - whether as a result of specific youth policy or youth policy as part of overall national development. Meeting the essential needs of young people was agreed as fundamental. Such needs could best be serviced, firstly through education. The use of both formal education and non-formal education programmes - for youth in and out of the normal schooling system - was recognised.

Mr. Sabanayagam in his paper had emphasised the commitment of the Indian Government to educational provision. In the field of non-formal education, India launched the National Adult Education Programme on 2 October 1978. The Programme aims to reach the entire population of 100 million illiterate persons in the 15-35 age group within the next five years. Mr. Sabanayagam, in reply to questions from the floor, stressed that non-formal education was not of a lower quality than that provided through the formal system. The Government of India, he said, lay great store in its drive to eliminate illiteracy because it felt that literacy was a cornerstone for self improvement and self reliance, particularly among young people.

Secondly, the need to mobilise and interest youth in national development was recognised. The energy, idealism and commitment of young people could be harnessed beneficially. Full participation in the "decision-making process" was, therefore, a requisite.

Youth policy required particular attention to the needs of young women. It was recognised that, in existing programmes, women effectively received only the fringe benefits, in the sense that their special needs were generally not met. Starting from a point of disadvantage, without special provision, the effect of existing programmes meant that women as a group were falling increasingly behind. The special needs of young women were perceived as existing both in education - in and out of the schooling system - and employment opportunities. Their needs existed in both urban and rural settings.

The needs of young women were, therefore, felt to require special application of comprehensive youth policy. For a youth policy to be comprehensive, the areas of education, participation and employment required to be covered in urban and rural contexts.

6. Mutual support between Youth and Governments

In determining the objectives of youth policy, delegates noted the costs involved in attaining them. It was noted, for instance, that employment-generating schemes were expensive; developing such schemes might be impracticable because of financial constraints. In discussions arising from the presentation by the Diploma Course participants, the question "What can governments afford?" was turned on its head. The course participants posed the question "Can a government afford not to develop such employment-generating schemes?" It was argued that young people were poised to make strategic and major contributions to national development. Conversely, if their energies were not utilised, particularly in a manner that left youth disillusioned, a large gap could grow in social commitment to development goals; the future economic regeneration of the nation might be adversely affected.

Discussion on the presentation by the course participants broadened with the consideration that perhaps the young were asking too much of their governments. Delegates asked whether, instead, the approach of youth should be "What can youth do for their governments?", not merely "What can governments do for youth?"

Discussion focused on the question of the rural-urban drift, and the acute employment problems this reflected. The Diploma Course participants acknowledged that there were no simple solutions. Delegates were reminded that urban migration had its roots in development strategies based too strongly on capital resource accumulation, capital investment and industrialisation. The change "required in our national values" could here be implemented. The course participants agreed that youth should contribute its energies and idealism to rural development, but that governments had a definite role to play in providing incentives and infrastructure for the establishment of rural industries, and in emphasising labour-intensive activities in rural areas. In this way, youth and governments would help each other.

Delegates agreed the attractiveness of such a co-operative approach. They recognised the need for rural development. The delegate from Malawi, himself a farmer, felt that "youth should be able to work with their hands", in their contribution to national development. The delegate from Kenya agreed that youth should participate to the fullest in rural development, "and be assisted in participation. They should have a choice of employment when they leave school, or be given opportunities to become productively self-employed in rural self-employment. Life in the rural areas should be such as to advance the contribution of youth."

It was agreed that training of young people was of particular importance in facilitating youth's contribution to national development, particularly in the rural sector.

7. A Unified Approach

Bearing in mind agreed objectives for youth policy, and the fact that youth and governments should co-operate in national development, it was agreed that the two lines of debate - whether youth policy should be specific or part of an integrated whole - overlapped considerably. Individual countries would naturally emphasise the approach they deemed most desirable, but all aimed in the same direction.

8. Policies of High Quality

Delegates also agreed that youth policy required certain attributes in order to retain its effectiveness and continue to mobilise the enthusiasm of its "clientele".

Youth policy required first to be comprehensive, in line with earlier agreement. This was necessary because of the extent of the problems facing youth. It required to be flexible,

due to the diversity of the problems and their changing nature. Delegates agreed that nothing could be of greater disservice to the young than static, moribund youth policies. Finally, to aid comprehensiveness and flexibility, youth policy required to be regularly evaluated. Delegates felt that such attention would ensure youth policies of high quality.

9. Government Machinery

While agreeing that the two lines of debate overlapped, that a partnership between youth and governments was necessary, that youth policies - however addressed - should be open to evaluation, delegates recognised that there are different approaches to the kinds of government machinery that may be used in executing youth policy. Should specific ministries be established to cover youth affairs, or should youth policy proceed via established government organs in the wide variety of fields of concern not only to youth but the population at large?

Delegates agreed that structures were required to co-ordinate the formulation and implementation of policy. They disagreed as to whether such co-ordination should be the province of a special ministry or of a co-ordinating agency with access to several ministries. With a comprehensive youth policy involved with so many areas of national affairs, (education, manpower planning, rural development), all requiring financial subventions from treasury departments or development corporations, no single ministry could assume co-ordination without dangers of tokenism or mere "window-dressing".

Conversely, it was pointed out by the Diploma Course participants - who had accumulated field experience in youth affairs - that, in their joint experience, programme implementation of policies for youth had rarely been satisfactory. Different programmes from different ministries and agencies often overlapped, or even conflicted. Programmes tended to be a series of vertical operations with little horizontal inter-action. A lack of resource integration often meant wastage.

The same points had been raised by Mr. Sabanayagam in his address. He had commented that the youth programmes in India highlighted the need for co-ordination. Programmes as they stood were sporadic and isolated from one another. Although individually impressive, programmes generated serious imbalances. There was, he said, no rationale in the allocation of funds between programmes meant for a comparatively small number of student youth and those for the much larger group of non-student youth.

The course participants indicated several instances of successful co-ordination, including ministries of youth affairs. One example was the Samoan Ministry of Youth Affairs and its use of a 'seminar' system of consultation and co-ordination. While not confining their views to

ministries of youth affairs, the course participants advocated a central body to plan for youth within the framework of the national economy to ensure co-ordination of youth programmes, to recognise voluntary organisations working for young people and to disburse financial resources to those that met established criteria.

As discussion proceeded it was noted that, in several African countries, young people were already playing key roles in government. In one country, the average age of Cabinet members was 32. The observation was made, however, that while this indicated that some young individuals were in positions of power, this did not mean that young people generally had an effective influence on policy, or that satisfactory arrangements existed for the effective execution and development of youth policy.

Delegates re-emphasised their agreement that co-ordination was necessary for effective government policy on youth affairs. Clearly, however, the choice of co-ordinating structure would vary from country to country.

10. Youth Participation

Discussion broadened to the question of youth participation in policy formulation. The bridge between governmental co-ordinating apparatus and the concept of participation was made by Mr. Mandelson, in replying to questions on his paper. He had no time, he said, for imitation parliaments, in "separate fora or committees for youth," divorced from the real decision-making process. "I'm not in the business of talking about policy for hours on end without the ability to do something about it."

His point was taken up by some delegates, who questioned whether - even given every opportunity - young people generally had a desire to become participants in policy-formulation at a high level. Where was evidence of motivation? They pointed to levels of youth apathy evident in many countries. Young people generally had the vote at age 18. Opportunities for participation therefore existed widely. The question was not one of deliberate exclusion on the parts of governments, but of failure on the part of youth to utilise opportunities.

Other delegates differed, believing that special institutional structures were necessary to facilitate participation by young people. If young people had the chance and the structures to participate in an orderly fashion, there would be less likelihood of political protest and disaffection. Delegates indicated the experience of member Commonwealth countries which had provided for active and responsible involvement of young people in, for instance, university and local government structures. Such involvement had encouraged and facilitated creative dialogue and co-operative action.

The majority view was that a need existed for mechanisms for youth participation. Differences existed as to whether these should provide for increased access to present political platforms, or for specifically created structures for the expression of youth.

There were three divergences from this view. One held that limits should be set as to the extent of special provision for youth participation, lest democracy be seen to have undue preferences. A second held that youth should not merely plead their case in the form of a search for concessions. The delegate from Zambia recommended that the young should "organise themselves into pressure groups", to make policy organs respond to their case. The third observed that bureaucratic forms were often ineffective. The case of rural development was cited. What youth needed in such a case was not access to participation, but access to land.

Great enthusiasm was expressed, however, for Professor Hall's paper, in which he had argued forcibly for participation at community level. Westminster styles of government, the Professor said, were founded at a time of no mass media, of no developing countries with their special needs. What was now required was a style of government that included continuing dialogue among all sections of the nation - government, party and people. The needs of development required mass commitment; the facilities of mass media could integrate this on a national level. Professor Hall believed that community councils provided a forum for ordinary men and women to become involved in the debate on policy.

The Diploma Course participants also attached great importance to community participation. They proposed a decentralisation of decision-making on programme expenditure and conduct within national guidelines. It was their view that, while policy creation was a national level function, programme development could be prosecuted with the national and regional levels working in concert, and programme implementation could properly be left to the regional/district levels. They were concerned that national policy decisions should be effectively carried out on the ground. Community involvement would ensure that young people were involved in national development on a mass scale.

11. The Role of the Commonwealth Youth Programme

Delegates recognised the Commonwealth Youth Programme's (CYP) long standing interest and concern for government policy on youth affairs. They viewed the presentation by the Diploma Course participants as evidence of the Programme's ability to disseminate information on policy widely and to good effect. They recommended that awareness of the various approaches to youth policy should be a mainstay of the Diploma Courses in Youth and Development.

In turn, the course participants felt that the most significant attribute of the CYP was its flexibility in responding to the needs of Commonwealth countries, notwithstanding its lack of

financial resources. They suggested, as further courses of action by the CYP, increased national-level training courses, the institution of mobile training teams, and an increased emphasis on meetings of young Commonwealth leaders.

The lack of financial resources was, naturally, a source of great concern to individual countries seeking to implement comprehensive youth policies. One delegate recommended that the CYP should organise a high-level meeting on the subject of aid for youth programmes.

Delegates discussed the role of the CYP, recommending action in the areas of fellowships, short-term training at national level, and the increased collection of useful data which would be of use to policy-makers. Emphasis was placed on the problem of youth unemployment and in meeting of young Commonwealth leaders - on local, national and regional, as well as pan-Commonwealth levels.

The Meeting regretted the CYP's increasing problems with finance. They regretted, in particular, the suspension of job creation projects authorised by the Commonwealth Youth Affairs Council in April, 1978. Turning to the question of best results for funds available, delegates requested an enhancement of the CYP's information service. Co-ordination with other international agencies was also considered desirable.

The delegate from Britain spoke on the subject of highest quality from scarce resources. "What the Commonwealth Youth Programme cannot give in quantity, it can certainly make up in quality. A quality programme has certain attributes, of which the level of sharing and interchange among members is one. I look, in particular, to such meetings as the Meeting of Young Commonwealth Leaders in Ocho Rios, and the Second Meeting due to be held shortly in Sri Lanka, as evidence of quality in interchange at a crucial level."

TEN PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH POLICY

After the presentations and discussion, delegates agreed the following ten basic principles which could be regarded as having common application to all Commonwealth governments in formulating, evaluating and revising government policy on youth affairs:

1. A youth policy or full co-ordinated set of policies for young people is necessary.
2. It should be consistent with and supportive of the national development strategy.
3. It must recognise the diversity of the youth population and the great variety of needs; the policy must therefore be comprehensive and flexible.

4. The policy must be integrative and not divisive. Provision should be made for appropriate machinery for the co-ordination of policies of various government departments as they affect youth.
5. It must provide for participation by the young in policy formulation, implementation and administration.
6. Consistent with 3, above, it should ensure that youth programmes make appropriate provision for young women.
7. It must provide training programmes for people working with youth, consistent with the overall objectives of the youth policy.
8. To ensure that relevance is maintained youth policy must be continually evaluated.
9. Although each country must determine for itself the nature and conduct of its own youth programme, it is suggested that each country take the opportunities provided to learn from the experience of others, and to assist others by providing information and practical help based on its own experiences through the Commonwealth Youth Programme.
10. The Commonwealth Youth Programme must keep informed on the youth policies of member states through meetings such as the Chandigarh Meeting on Government Policy on Youth Affairs, meetings of the Commonwealth Youth Affairs Council and pan-Commonwealth Meetings of Young Leaders.

The Meeting concluded with a discussion on general points of interest in the field of youth affairs.