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Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit herewith the text of a report on "Youth Centres and the Social Maladjustment of Youth" which was submitted for the Congress by the Secretariat of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

YOUTH CENTRES AND THE SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENT OF YOUTH

This study summarizes the findings of a meeting of experts on the subject, which took place at the Unesco Youth Institute, Gauting, Munich (Federal Republic of Germany), in April 1960, and has been prepared by a specialist, Mr. Peter Kuentler (United Kingdom). The facts collected and the statements produced relate particularly to some experiments carried out in European and North American countries and should not, therefore, lead to generalizations.^{1/}

This study should be considered as a preface to inquiries, research and experiments to be undertaken later on all over the world.

^{1/} This study should also not be interpreted as stating a doctrine of UNESCO on social maladjustment of youth.

I. THE PHENOMENON OF SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENT

The social maladjustment of youth is, in this paper, used to describe a phenomenon which has been observed in many, if not most, of the highly industrialized and urbanized countries of the world. It has aroused much public concern and considerable press comment, although its precise nature and, still more, its aetiology have so far not been described in terms which can be accepted as having general validity. Nevertheless there has arisen a new vocabulary to describe, at least, the most popular form of social maladjustment, e.g., teddy boys (United Kingdom), nozem (Netherlands), J.B. or blousons noirs (France), Tsotsi (South Africa), bodgies and widgies (Australia), halbstarken (Germany), tai pau (China), tiao zoku (Japan), hooligans - borrowed from 19th century England (Poland), stiliagyi (U.S.S.R.), etc., etc.

One common feature is that the young people concerned adopt a particular form of dress, which in some cases is indicated by their names, e.g., blousons noirs (originating possibly from the example of the film featuring Marlon Brando, "The Wild Ones"), or teddy boys (originating in the colourful costume of the "dandy" of the era of King Edward VII - e.g., c. 1905 - Teddy = Edward). Another common feature, arising from the public appearances of these young people, has been the proliferation of articles in the press, both general and specialist, of programmes on the wireless and television. Some of these have been well-informed and accurate, but others, striving merely after sensationalism, have grossly exaggerated both the extent, in terms of the numbers of young people involved, and the seriousness of the behaviour exhibited, e.g., especially in terms of sexual activities. It has been argued also that the publicity given has in itself been a recruiting force, inducing more young people to indulge in extravagant or even violent behaviour in order to get into the limelight. It certainly appears to be the case that many incidents occurred merely as imitations of or a form of competition with other similar occurrences previously given wide publicity.*

* cf., for example, Bondy, Curt, et al. Jugendliche Stören die Ordnung. Bericht und Stellungnahme zu den Halbstarkendrawallen, München, Inventa Verlag, 1957, 151 pp.

Among reports of the forms of socially maladjusted behaviour among young people, some features appear fairly commonly, namely:

- 1 - that the behaviour of these young people is more frequently of a mischievous, negativistic, pointlessly destructive kind rather than criminally delinquent in the sense of stealing for gain;
- 2 - that such behaviour is more characteristic of boys than of girls;
- 3 - that such young people move about in "gangs," not necessarily carefully organized or hierarchical;
- 4 - that some of the young people concerned appear to be emotionally immature in the sense that they live without thought for the future or future consequences of action; that escapades are undertaken on the spur of the moment, that the immediate gratification of whims is important and that there are few of the inhibiting features of adult or mature behaviour.

It is also sometimes the case, but by no means generally so:

- 5 - that some, but not all, of these young people have a history of deprivation in early childhood;
- 6 - that such behaviour is more typical, but not exclusively, of "slum" areas and economically underprivileged groups in society.

In particular the participation of young people from the well-to-do or middle classes has been noted from some countries as a feature of public disturbances (e.g., Federal Republic of Germany) while in others (e.g., France, Denmark) such young people have developed special forms of indulging in socially unacceptable behaviour such as "surprise parties" (c.f. the film "Les Tricheurs," etc.).

There appears to have been a "fashion" in these outbreaks of public disturbances. Thus, the so-called "Krawalle" in German cities were reported mainly during 1956, and this too was a period when the gangs of teddy boys were widely reported in London. On the other hand, the French

reports of "blousons noirs" are rather more recent.* Even within one country, the provincial towns are often affected one or two years later than the metropolis. In addition to general public disorder, such as holding up traffic, dangerous or noisy activities with motor bicycles or scooters, provocative behaviour in crowded streets, cinemas, bathing beaches, vandalism in parks and playgrounds, it is especially relevant to report that youth clubs and youth centres in different countries seem, from time to time, to have been the special object of attention and intimidation from groups of "hooligans." In some cases extensive damage to property is caused, the breaking of windows, lights, furniture, the destruction of games and sports equipment; also there have been attacks on leaders and members of youth groups either inside the club premises or, more frequently, in the street outside.

In most instances which have been observed and described in detail the initial purpose of the invaders is always one of provocation, that is by outrageous behaviour or abusive or insolent remarks to provoke physical contact: once the bystander or official or youth club member actually touches one of the gang or appears to be about to do so, then this is taken as sufficient pretext for the use of violence by all the members of the gang. However the number of cases in which violence of this kind has been used is much smaller than the number where there has simply been a flamboyant exhibition of noisy and mischievous behaviour.

A particular form of such behaviour has been that which incorporates a considerable measure of real physical danger, i.e., reckless overtaking of traffic by motor bicycles, the game of "chicken," i.e., of driving motor cars as fast as possible towards each other or some dangerous hazard and competing as to who stops first (c.f. the famous James Dean film "Rebel Without a Cause").

No attempt is made here to explain** the behaviour either in socio-

* See, for example, the many articles listed in No. 33 of Liaisons, bulletin of the Association nationale des éducateurs de jeunes inadaptés, 27 rue de laubeuge, Paris XI, January 1960, p. 29.

** Some preliminary attempt at explanation is to be found in the report of the Unesco Youth Institute on "The Maladjusted Behaviour of Young People in Present-Day Society," meeting of experts, 3-6 January 1958, Gaunting/Glunish, Unesco Youth Institute, June, 1958.

logical or in psychological terms. Some of the symptoms are not new, in that behaviour of this type has frequently been reported as typical of delinquent or potentially delinquent youth, of gangs, etc. But what is new is the scale on which this behaviour has been observed in recent years and the simultaneous way in which it has appeared in so many parts of the world.

Most of the evidence available, as has been mentioned initially, comes from highly industrialized and urbanized countries. However, there are also reports from the less developed countries of similar phenomena occurring in the cities and towns which are rapidly expanding as new population, chiefly young men, comes in from the surrounding villages and rural areas. Unequipped socially or vocationally for town life, they exhibit many of the symptoms of "anomie" which were frequently reported during similar epochs of industrial revolution in Europe (c.f., in Britain, Mayhew (1847), Charles Dickens, Samuel Barrett (1899)).

II. YOUTH CENTRES AND SOCIALLY MALADJUSTED YOUTH

There is an inherent ambivalence in youth work as it is found in many countries to-day. On the one hand it is seen as a form of positive informal education, of out-of-school activities which may complement or supplement the process of formal education whether it is concerned with those who are still receiving full-time instruction or with those who have already severed all connections with the apparatus of education. On the other hand, it is considered to be one aspect of social welfare, substituting for or making good the deficiencies of play facilities, of housing, of adequate welfare provision in factories or workshops and, in many cases, as a prevention and also as part of the treatment, of juvenile delinquency. The distinction is, perhaps, more theoretical than real, but it is reflected in a wide variety of administrative divisions, e.g., "Jugendfürsorge and Jugendpflege": the debates as to whether the training of youth leaders should be undertaken in within the framework of education or of social work.

There is no real evidence that youth work of any kind presents

delinquency. Even with matched control groups, it is unlikely that any such evidence will ever be forthcoming, but it seems a highly probable inference both from general experience and from certain carefully devised experimental projects that the presence or absence of certain forms of youth centres can have an effect on the prevalence of juvenile delinquency.* However this may be, during the last decade, and particularly in the last half of it, there has been a general expansion of certain types of youth work, which has had as its avowed or implied purpose either (or both) the prevention of social maladjustment and delinquency or its treatment. It should again be noted here that social maladjustment and delinquency are not always officially identical. Thus, an enquiry to the police in one capital city of Europe in 1958 by the youth authorities for information about the increase in the amount of "hooliganism" elicited the reply that there was no such increase. This reply was possible at a time when the public was fully aware both from personal experience and from the press of a greatly extended occurrence of "incidents," because the incidents were not always reported to the police and if reported often did not involve anything which warranted an official report or the charging of anyone with the committing of an offence.

Authorities of local or central government with a responsibility for youth have in many countries themselves opened or subsidized other organizations to open youth centres. They have received a variety of titles and forms, but it is characteristic that as distinct from the meetings of the traditional youth movements and organizations (political, religious, vocational, ideological, etc.) no conditions about attendance are imposed and there are, at any rate in the initial stages, no symbols of membership (e.g., subscriptions, badges, membership cards, etc.). In some cases special buildings have been constructed, some very elaborate and well equipped; elsewhere parts of school buildings have been used. Here diffi-

* The well-known Cambridge-Somewell Study (U.S.A.) seems to show a negative correlation; but other, less scientifically controlled projects, are more hopeful, c.f. J.M. Pears, Growing Up in the City, a study of juvenile delinquency in an urban neighbourhood, University Press of Liverpool, 1954; M.L. Turner, Ship Without Sail, an account of the Barge Boys' Club, University of London Press, 1953, 160 pp.; G. Jordan and R. Fisher, Self-Portrait of Youth, or The Urban Adolescent, Heinemann, London, 1956, 170 pp.

culties frequently arise if there is dual use of the rooms, and it is sometimes maintained that young people, especially those whose attendance is most desired, will not voluntarily return to the atmosphere of a school. This problem can be met if special rooms in the school (or preferably a special building on the school campus) can be set aside for the use of the youth centre with a separate entrance and a wholly different style of interior decoration and equipment. The chief advantage is the availability of facilities provided for the school which cannot economically be provided additionally for a separate youth centre, such as a gymnasium, workshops, sports fields, etc.

There is much variety in the size of these so-called "open" youth centres. Some have been made large because of deliberate policy of attracting young people of the "unattached" or less sociable kind through an atmosphere of anonymity. Thus one such centre of many years standing in a large harbour town took pride in its title of "the street corner with a roof on." Here there would be much noise and movement; at the times when younger children (under 14) were catered for, the main attraction was large-scale and very active physical games; for the "teen-agers" the main attraction was dancing and/or the opportunity of listening to the music. No attempt was made to make personal contact with the young people who came in large numbers unless they themselves made the first approach to the adults who were staffing the club. From this anonymous mass, however, it became possible to create a number of activity groups (physical recreation, painting, scouts, etc.). One criticism was that those young people who were most socially maladjusted were the least likely to "transfer" into small groups; and this seems to have been justified since a number of delinquents were later found to have attended the centre but merely as occasional visitors for dancing. A similar approach but with a more disciplined and polished atmosphere is found in several countries where "youth cafés" of various kinds have been opened by organizations and by official youth departments. At many of these the basis of attendance is a "commercial" one, although the price of food, drink and, where it is charged, admission is often kept low

(by subsidy) to increase the attractiveness of the youth café which is in competition with ordinary commercial cafés and dance halls. The proprietors of these latter do not always resent this competition if they find that the youth café is succeeding in taking away from them the more rowdy elements who may do expensive damage to their premises and, in any case, may give their establishments a bad name and so keep away the more "normal" clientèle.

Dancing is not always an ingredient of the youth café and some organizations have opened small expresso bars with décors as exotic and gay as possible where the chief attraction appears to be the atmosphere and the unlimited opportunity for conversation with one's friends for the price of a cup of coffee or a bottle of coco-cola. This also means that the venture has to be subsidized as educational or social work, because it will not pay its own way.

The main purpose of all such centres, and they vary somewhat according to the age group (i.e., under or over 17), the income level or social background for which they cater, is to provide a neutral but attractive atmosphere which young people will enjoy. In the classic phrase, it "keeps them off the street": more positively it provides an opportunity for making contacts and for meeting. The Albemarle Report* puts as the first aim and objective, "the fundamental task of the Youth Service" - "Association", "to encourage young people to come together into groups of their own choosing their social needs must be met before their needs for training or for formal instruction..." But for the socially maladjusted there is also the opportunity to come into contact with adults who are sympathetic and who may be asked to help them solve their difficulties and conflicts with other sections of society.

However, many of the large centres, whether they take the form of a café or of a more orthodox youth centre, with opportunities for activity groups or small friendship clubs, probably attract only a very small proportion of the socially maladjusted. This may be due to one or more of several reasons: that they are often run and organized according to "middle-class"

* The Youth Service in England and Wales, Comd. 929, H.M. Stationery Office, London, 1960, 136 pp.

cultural concepts which are "out of tune" with the background or with the expectations of these particular young people: that they succeed in attracting a majority of ordinary young people who are well able to make use of the facilities offered and who within a comparatively short period constitute an "in-group" and so effectively prevent a minority group with different standards and objectives from participating; that the leaders in charge, because of their temperament or training find it easier or more profitable or only possible to accept young people who can accept what are the norms of social behaviour. In the absolute sense, then, it is probable that there are not - and cannot be - any completely "open" centres: even without any rules and regulations, a process of "self-selection" takes place. Croft and Crygien reported that normal youth centre facilities did not "appeal to" the group of socially maladjusted boys they studied: Mays (op. cit.) suggests that though the facilities appealed to the boys in his experimental project (the Dolphin Club), the socially maladjusted boys failed to find there the friendship and relationships they were seeking and so they no longer came..

A different approach has been used in a number of experimental centres of different kinds where a deliberate attempt is made to work with existing groups of the socially maladjusted, especially gangs, starting both physically and in terms of attitudes and behaviour "at their level." Techniques for this type of work have been most fully worked out in the U.S.A., notably in the street club projects of New York.* This involves the employment of "unattached" youth leaders or social workers, who go out into the streets, cafés, factories, etc., and build up a relationship of mutual confidence with groups or gangs which are often quite small. In many cases, it may take some time and involve a great deal of "persuasive" activity (though this need not be the same as actually condoning illegal behaviour) before the worker is accepted. Examples, for instance, have been reported of workers, both men and women, being arrested together with

* See especially Crawford, Malamud and Dumpson, Working with Teen-Age Gangs, Welfare Council of New York City, New York, 1951, and also M.L. Turner (op. cit.) and the report of Lyon-Villeurbanne in "Liaisons" No. 33, January 1960.

the gang with which they were working. Some analogies might perhaps be found with certain aspects of the "worker-priest" movement. Frequently it becomes important for the worker to provide or find a home or headquarters for the group: this need not necessarily be elaborate or large; and the process of building it or repairing or decorating it is often a vital stage in redirecting the group's activities into more positive and constructive channels.

The subsequent phases of such experiments have varied greatly. Not all have been successful; some experiments, for instance, have come to an end because the members of the gang have persisted in anti-social or delinquent behaviour and have been arrested and convicted. In other cases, the group or gang has disintegrated in the new environment, as the activities, internal leadership, attitudes, behaviour, etc., changed. In others again, the gang as a whole after periods of up to two years on its own, having succeeded in establishing successful relationships with the workers and through them with the "outside" world, have been asked to join existing organizations, e.g., sports clubs, etc., as acceptable members. Other cases are reported of members of such groups voluntarily enlisting in the armed forces or the merchant navy, two traditional retreats for the socially maladjusted. In several instances the existence of such special centres has coincided with reports of a marked diminution of local juvenile delinquency, particularly of larceny.

Criticisms of this method have included the following:- that compared with normal youth work, it is extravagantly expensive, i.e., in the provision of premises, etc., for a very small group, sometimes only 8-10 and rarely more than 40-50 at a time; in particular that it is expensive of manpower at a time when skilled and competent youth workers are most difficult to find; that by segregating the "different" group, the problem of their social maladjustment is magnified rather than decreased; that the critical phase of "transfer" from the isolated special group to participation in ordinary society and its regular institutions is the point at which failure is most common; that the work is so demanding on the worker who is subjected

to intensive emotional and psychological as well as physical strain, that many workers have to resign after a short period, and that since the success of the experiment depends largely on the personal relationships established between the worker and group. This often involves the collapse of the whole experiment.

It is clear that much more attention will have to be given to the staffing problems of both approaches - the large-scale "open" centre and the smaller intensive group work. In both the need is for workers who can give their whole time and attention to the establishment of relationships of help and friendship (cf. the équipe d'amitié of Chazal) with young people who in the first instance will be suspicious and unwilling - even in some cases unable to enter into such relationships. This cannot easily be done if the youth centre is burdened with administrative and organizational duties of running a youth centre, organizing activities, meeting the demands of these young people with interests in sport, handicrafts, further education, etc.

To this primary need for people who are available for the needs of the socially maladjusted and who have the combination of a lack of prejudice and dogmatism plus a firm personal code of standards and values, the structure of the youth centre, the activities used, etc., are of secondary importance. Thus there are reports of workers meeting their groups on street corners, in cafés, at mobile coffee-stalls especially provided as meeting posts, and of their making use of warehouses, cellars, rooms in neighbourhood centres, settlement houses, youth centres, youth offices, hostels for boys on probation (semi-liberté), etc., etc.

It is worthy of mention that the police, especially in Denmark (the P.U.F. organization of Copenhagen), but also in other countries, have made a special contribution in the provision of youth centres of different kinds and for different ages. For younger children still at school (under 14), there has been a great deal of attention focussed on "junk" (Denmark) or "adventure" (U.K.) playgrounds, where constructive play can be enjoyed and great development of supervised playgrounds, i.e., where personal relationship with an adult may be encouraged (especially in Sweden, Switzerland,

etc.). The provision of adequate facilities for physical recreation, especially of an exciting, adventurous and even dangerous kind, is of importance for many of the socially maladjusted whose behaviour often appears to involve an essential element of real danger (e.g., with motor cars, bicycles, etc.). There has been an increase in the number of organized centres for rock climbing, canoeing, "mountaineering," etc., but these are often difficult and expensive to provide for the working youth of big cities unless they are very favourably situated geographically; and some of these activities demand a higher standard of individual and group discipline than the socially maladjusted are prepared to undergo in the first instance. However, one interesting and successful experiment in the United Kingdom involved a group of difficult young people who were attracted to a youth canteen established in a disused railway station by a youth organization, and who then through the personal skill and enthusiasm of the leader - a woman - were encouraged to take up mountaineering and rock-climbing at week-ends.

There appears to be good reason for providing adequate facilities for sport and physical recreation, and seeing in them a form of therapy, remedial for some and preventive for others. Youth centres, therefore, should not be conceived merely as isolated buildings, nor should their programmes be planned wholly indoors. This form of provision will entail the expenditure of funds not only on physical sites, buildings and equipment, but also on instructors and, where necessary, travel costs (e.g., to the mountains or to the sea). There are also many instances of the adult enthusiasts for a particular sport being prepared to give up time voluntarily to act as leaders for youth groups.

III. SOME CONCLUSIONS

Social maladjustment of youth is a term used to describe a wide range of behaviour, from the mildly inconvenient to the intolerably delinquent. Many societies, as they become affluent and introduce high standards of social welfare and compulsory education, find it necessary to take some steps to prevent or change this behaviour. Rapid social and

technological change is a feature common now to both highly developed and so-called under-developed areas. In both types it is only exceptionally that, for instance, the provision of a youth centre in a rural area will contribute much to preventing young people from moving to the towns either to live there altogether or at least for their recreation. Within the towns themselves, youth centres, provided they are well-sited and adequately equipped both with staff and material resources, probably constitute an effective prophylaxis for a proportion of so-called normal young people who might otherwise (i.e., if left without recreational facilities) become socially maladjusted. It is, however, much more doubtful whether the ordinary youth centres either attract or, if they do so, succeed in effecting any significant change in those young people who are already showing symptoms of social maladjustment. For these, more experimental work is urgently needed, making use of "unattached" workers and utilizing the techniques of social group work.

Youth centres have a contribution to make at the preventive and at the remedial level. No one pattern, in terms of size, programme, type of discipline, age-range, etc., has emerged as being superior. This indicates the need for an extremely flexible policy and the provision of a wide variety of facilities. Possibly the acceptance of such a policy, being in itself a recognition by the community concerned of the importance of its youth, may make some contribution to removing the causes of maladjustment which lie deep within the structure and values of our whole society.

This archiving project is a collaborative effort between United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and American Society of Criminology, Division of International Criminology. Any comments or questions should be directed to Cindy J. Smith at CJSmithphd@comcast.net or Emil Wandzilak at emil.wandzilak@unodc.org.