



## The Albemarle Report

A paper marking the report's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary presented to the Annual Conference of the Federation for Detached Youth Work 12-14 November 2010 at Yarnfield Conference Centre, Staffordshire.

The report was the result of a major review of the Youth Service in England and Wales presented to Parliament by the Minister of Education in February 1960. The Chair of the review committee was The Countess of Albermarle, O.B.E., hence the report's popular title.

The committee was appointed by the Minister of Education in November 1958 with the following terms of reference:-

"To review the contribution which the Youth Service of England and Wales can make in assisting young people to play their part in the life of the community, in the light of changing social and industrial conditions, and of current trends in other branches of the education service; and to advise accordingly to what priorities best value can be obtained for the money spent ... We were appointed at a most crucial time first, because several aspects of national life, to which the Youth Service is particularly relevant, are today causing widespread and acute concern. These include serious short-term problems, such as that of the "bulge" in the adolescent population. They include also much more complex and continuous elements of social change, elements to which adolescents are responding sharply and often in ways which adults find puzzling or shocking".

The report indicated a high level of concern about the state of the Youth Service at that time....." at present in a state of acute depression. All over the country and in every part of the Service, there are devoted workers, and in some areas, the inspiration of exceptional individuals or organisations, or the encouragement of local education authorities have kept spirits unusually high. But in general, we believe it is true to say that those who work in the Service feel themselves neglected and held in small regard, both in educational circles and by the public generally. We have been told time and time again that the Youth Service is "dying on its feet" or "out on a limb". No service can do its best work in such an atmosphere. Our witnesses were nevertheless in no way disheartened about the fundamental value of the service. They gave us the firm impression (and again this was supported by our own observations) that a properly nourished Youth Service is profoundly worth while; and that it is of special importance in a society subject to the kinds of change we have noted."

*Ringing any bells yet?*

The report covered all aspects of the Service including activities and facilities, staffing and training, and finance. It finished with a raft of recommendations in response to their programme of consultation up and down the country, designed to make a lasting legacy for young people during the 1960's, 70's and beyond.

The final paragraph in the report's summary of findings is a most telling one and speaks for itself:

"What is required, however, above all on the part of the general public is an imaginative appreciation of the changed outlook of young people today. It is easy to condemn actions and attitudes which are innocuous in themselves simply because they differ from, and so appear to offend against codes of behaviour or appearance, which to the younger generation have become meaningless.

Moral indignation is best kept for what is morally reprehensible and even then will be ineffective unless it is deeply informed by sympathetic understanding. The effort to understand lies at the basis of all virtue; it is surely here that the nation can make a beginning".

In this thumbnail sketch of the report, I am attempting to offer just a flavour of the issues of the day and ways in which it was thought a properly nourished Youth Service might address them. Aspects of the service development as a consequence of the report can be glanced elsewhere but I take this opportunity to mark its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by acknowledging its role in sowing the seeds of Detached Youth Work. What eventually flourished may not have been envisaged originally, but those seeds were sown....

"A particular weakness in the Youth Service, for which all our witnesses have shown concern, is its failure to reach so many of the young people today. The figure often quoted was that the service was attracting only one in three, and we found confirmation of this, first, in the replies of local authorities to our questionnaire and secondly, in the survey carried out by the Central Office of Information..... However admirable a Youth Service may be, it is of course neither possible nor desirable that everyone or even the great majority of young people at any one time should take part in it.

Many will remain happily and fruitfully 'unattached'.... It seems to us true however that many who are not now 'attached' either officially or unofficially could, if properly approached, be attached and benefit from the attachment ..... we suggest that particular attention be given to the special needs of new housing areas, of new towns and of 'tough' areas, and ways of bringing in the unattached".

It became clear that "bringing in" implied club attendance assisted by existing club members ..." The young speak most cogently to the young, and any approach to the unattached might best be made by club members themselves... we believe that without the missionary work of those already in the clubs we

shall fail to bring in the unattached. Responsibility for the unattached rests upon young people just as much as upon adults”.

I don't know to what extent this club 'recruitment' approach worked or not but what did happen was that the term 'unattached' became an identity label for any young people who had no contact with the Youth Service and its variety of local authority or voluntary sector provision. As a result of the report's publication, great interest was shown in finding out who the 'unattached' were and what they were about. Experimental projects, designed to address this, sprung up around the country using a variety of approaches and method. The seeds had been sown and the shoots emerged, resulting in the publication of myriad reports on their progress, such as 'The Unattached' by Mary Morse published by Penguin in 1965, and '*Working with Unattached Youth*' by G Goetschius and J Tash published by Routledge and Kegan Paul in 1967.

Over time the term 'unattached' became 'detached' and the identity label given to youth workers with no attachment to the responsibilities connected with building based provision for young people. Hence Detached Youth Workers – not those working with 'detached youth work'.

There are great examples around the country of successful work achieved by workers meeting young people on their own ground; street corners, cafes, parks or arcades, establishing voluntary professional relationships with them, with the emphasis on the young person's needs and ways in which relevant responses can be negotiated with them. Acceptance, talking and most importantly, **listening** to young people are the key factors, including of course the long term framework of operation required to develop these relationships, not short term knee jerk reactions chasing quick 'results'.

It's because of the successful work achieved by these projects and their inspirational workers that I maintain a good degree of optimism of the future of our work. Just as in the Albermarle days, young people will always be around and have need for understanding, acceptance, support, and at all times, healthy challenge.

It's amazing what can be achieved from the starting point of sharing a smile. But you already know that don't you?

Are there any decision makers out there listening?

Love and respect to all youth workers and their supporters.

**Bill Cox**  
**President F.D.Y.W.**  
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