

Adolescents and Society

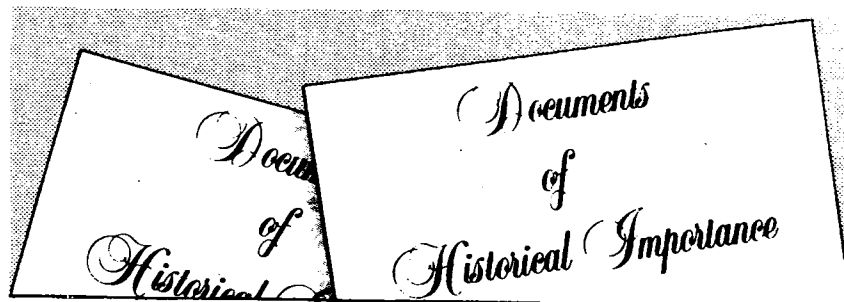
By James Hemming Phd

The Arthur Mellows Lecture 1962

**This Material is Copyrighted**

Permission has been sought and granted to the Wales Youth Agency to provide this material on CD for educational purposes only. No unauthorised use or reproduction of this material is permitted.

**Reproduced with the permission of the National Youth Agency.  
For further details on the NYA visit their website:  
[www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)**



## ADOLESCENTS AND SOCIETY

by James Hemming PhD

The Arthur Mellows Memorial Lecture 1962

Every society has to take, and take again, the impact of generation after generation of adolescents. This is good for society. Adolescents question, criticise and test. By this process, preconceived ideas and values are shaken and probed, renewed or rejected. One reason why the Hitlers of this world never last long is that they can capture only a few generations of adolescents with their rigid systems. After that they become the Establishment and become subject to the wholesome challenge of the adolescent group. The creative, critical energy of man is perpetually renewed through its adolescents.

Nevertheless, although adolescents have always wholesomely challenged the established order, and have always been a bit of a nuisance while doing it, there are new factors in the situation to-day. One is that "the established order" is to-day much more like an established confusion. This makes things extremely difficult for adolescents. Adolescents need a recognisable order which they can test and against which they can test themselves. In the past they have caught on to ideas and organisations that seemed to them to represent the way ahead for society. This gave them an opportunity of revolting in a purposeful way: they joined something or other to which they could give themselves with enthusiasm. By this process they not only challenged the established order but found a road of co-operative purpose by which they could move, as the years passed, into a close, responsible relationship with society. To-day what they see around them is not an old order within which a better way of life is clearly waiting to be born, but a confused mixture of ideas and organisations without any clearly marked growing points or direction. Hence the sense of frustration, the rebels without a cause, the angry young men.

Another difference between the present and the past is that the point of having arrived in society is no longer clearly defined for young people. Adolescents, at the same time as challenging society, are also desperately anxious to prove their worth within society. Primitive societies managed to direct youth's aggressive energy and give them the assurance of arrival by the initiation ceremony. This was tough and difficult — like surviving on your own in the jungle, or bearing a flogging without flinching. But the preparation also included training for adult life. Once a young person had been through the training and passed the test he, or she, was accepted as a full member of adult

society. He had arrived. Half a century ago arrival points were still clearly marked: completing an apprenticeship, coming of age, getting married and so forth. To-day the arrival points have all been slurred over. So that young people are left in perpetual doubt about where they are.

A third difference is that, as well as being left in doubt about their worth in the community, they are at the same time in great demand — commercially. There are a lot of them; they earn a lot of money; they have a wide margin to spend on themselves. Fortunes are to be made by creating and satisfying adolescent demand. So adolescents find themselves both wooed and uncertain of themselves: a very confusing state of affairs for them.

An additional point of difference between the present and the past is that the modern adolescent is taller, heavier, stronger, fitter, and matures earlier physically, than ever before. The contemporary adolescent group generates far more energy than the adolescent group of which their fathers were members. So there are a million or so more of them in society to-day and, on average, each is generating more energy per head than formerly. At the same time we are surrounding them with confusion of every kind, and often failing to provide them with an appropriate sense of worth or appropriate outlets for their energy. Small wonder we find ourselves in an explosive situation or that eruptions of hooliganism are getting to be a common feature in the life of our society.

I have tried, for a start, to sketch in the background broadly. I would now like to present the problem of dealing successfully with our robust adolescent group within society under four heads: first, the struggle of adolescents to gain maturity in a confusing world; second, the conflicts of view that separate typical adult thinking from typical adolescent thinking to-day; thirdly, the menace of the anti-social adolescent; and, finally, what we can do to help our adolescents attain maturity.

One of the illusions of the past was that, once we were grown up, we settled down to being ourselves and remained like that until old age eventually overtook us and we declined. It never was like this but we used to behave and think as though it was. To-day we know that life is a process of change and adjustment from start to finish. Each age has its particular problems of life to tackle. The main

tasks facing the infant are to walk and to speak. The man or woman of 65 or 70 has to learn to retire. The young married couples are faced with the tasks of getting along happily together, adjusting to a lower standard of living individually, and working out a new kind of relationship with their friends; the older married couples are challenged by the need to start again in a new way after the children have left home, and so on. Every age of life faces us with tasks we have to tackle and surmount if we are to go on growing and developing as personalities. The job of discovering ourselves, fulfilling ourselves, is never done; it simply takes on different aspects at different periods of life.

Adolescence, too, is marked by characteristic tasks of life — tasks of development. It differs from the remainder of life not because adolescents are different from the rest of us but because they are absorbed with their own tasks of development which they must surmount if they are ever to bring their adult selves to birth.

Because it is the bridge between childhood and adulthood, adolescence is a particularly crucial phase of growth which heaps many tasks of development upon the adolescent; apart from this it is just as much a human struggle as any other phase of life. Indeed, if our adult life throws us back into a typically adolescent situation we are likely to respond like an adolescent. I noticed, for example, that when I found myself facing an academic examination comparatively late in life, I was just as edgy, apprehensive and emotional about it as any adolescent in similar circumstances. Or again, there is little reason to suppose that people who fall in love at forty behave with greater wisdom than those who fall in love at fourteen.

It follows that the only way we can hope to understand adolescents is by studying sympathetically the tasks of life which face them. A good deal of work has been done on this by various people. Here, for your consideration, is a short list.

Adolescence is the time when the emotions grow up rapidly. This means that adolescents have to adjust to a feeling that life is both more extensive and more intensified. Ecstasies and depressions can both be overwhelming. It takes time to learn to live with this inner turmoil and to reduce it to some kind of order. If this were the only task of development facing adolescents, it would give them plenty to keep them busy. But it is only one of several demanding tasks. Another is the need to establish personal independence. If an individual fails to establish his personal independence during his adolescent years, he is under risk of remaining a dependent personality for life. Hence the adolescent's drive to assure himself of his own independence has about it all the urgency of self-preservation. Which indeed it is. The third task derives

from the second. You cannot at the same time establish your own independence of personality and be a yes-man.

So adolescents must, and should, challenge authority. But challenge provokes criticism so that the adolescent, by his very striving to grow up, tends to isolate himself in a gloomy world of "nobody likes me any more," "everyone's against me," and so forth. This forces him into the need to find a new source of comfort and assurance by membership of some group outside his home circle. Hence the importance of friendship at this stage. But a group of friends creates its own challenges. The adolescent among his friends has to prove he is one of them — which induces him to conform — but he also has to prove his own identity, as someone of worth in his own right. This provokes him into seeking to make his mark as an individual. This effort may be accepted by his friends — which is splendid — or rejected by his friends — which is hurtful. So a third task of life is to master the art of establishing yourself with your contemporaries. That may sound easy but it can be extraordinarily difficult. A considerable proportion of the lonely people in society have been handicapped all the way through their lives in their personal relationships because they failed to learn to associate with others in a relaxed and happy way during their adolescent years.

Not only friendship as such challenges the adolescent but also friendship with the other sex. From what one hears one might suppose that contemporary adolescent society was entirely composed of Casanovas and nymphomaniacs. The truth is far from this. The typical approach of the adolescent to an admired member of the other sex is tentative and uncertain. "Am I worthy?" "Shall I measure up to this?" "Shall I know what to do?" Such doubts and not rash certainty are characteristic of our adolescents. The approach one to the other is typically gentle and sensitive and romantic. I am not suggesting that sex relationships to-day are not comparatively precocious, but back of the external display of self-assurance and ostentation is a lot of heart-searching and apprehension, a fear of showing up badly in the eyes of the loved one and a yearning for an ideal relationship. We must also remember that by no means all of the adolescents make the grade in their striving to come to terms with the other sex. The rejected ones suffer fiercely.

The problem of coming to terms with the other sex is closely related to the task of coming to terms with one's own sexuality. Boys are under the physical pressure of a full virility at an early age; girls under an emotional pressure partly deriving from their earlier maturation and earlier maturation of feeling, and partly from the sex-emphasis of the mass media. I shall return to the problem of adjustment to love and sex later from its social aspect. Here I wish only to mention it as an inescapable task of adolescent development.

I shall put to you only two more of the developmental tasks of adolescence, although the list could be extended further. There is the need to make one's mark in terms of achievement. The adolescent needs to win a sense of worth both in relation to his friends and in relation to society. If he is denied the opportunity to do this in a way that is both useful and appropriate to his powers, he will turn to some useless form of recognition instead. But, one way or another, he must make his mark in a form that society acknowledges. The only exceptions to this are the adolescent with an intense personal interest, which is self-satisfying in terms of achievement, and the adolescent who has given himself up as a possible success and retreats into a world of fantasy where dreams of glory are used as compensation for failure in real life.

The last of my list of basic tasks is the need to arrive at some set of values by which to guide one's life. I would emphasise "arrive at." The adolescent who merely accepts someone else's set of values is abdicating. His real task is "try all things and hold fast" to what he finds to be good. Let us notice that the situation among adolescents to-day is not that some have values and some do not — which is how many people seem to see it — but that different adolescents choose different sets of values in the light of their experience. An adolescent toughy gang, for example, is not without values. It has a clearly defined set of values. You must obey your leader, revile the police, be loyal to one another and so on. We may not approve of the values but they are there. Up to adolescence a child is content to take the values of his home for granted, whatever they may be; adolescence brings the call to examine the values of the surrounding community and abstract one's own **personal** set. That is why, at adolescence, the children of a Christian home not infrequently become agnostic, while the children of an agnostic home may start going to church.

One of the things that emerges the moment we consider the inescapable life-tasks of adolescents is that secondary education seems to be very little aware of them. The outcome of this is that adolescents are forced to lead a double life. School demands much of their attention, but has little relevance to their inner world of personal struggle. As they grow older, the world of school and the personal world fall further and further apart. A second effect is that the school plays little direct part in helping young people with their personal struggle to grow up. This is an extremely serious gap in our educational system. In preparing children for life modern education is far less efficient than the pre-adulthood training courses supplied by primitive people to their initiates.

Let us see where we have got so far. I have suggested that the background to adolescence to-day is particularly confusing and difficult. I have pointed out that what marks off adolescence from other phases of development in life is

that the adolescents have to attend to, and are largely absorbed by, certain inescapable tasks of development, such as learning to deal with a much increased capacity for feeling, establishing personal independence, mastering the arts of association and friendship, coming to terms with the other sex and personal sexuality, proving oneself through achievement, and working out a code of values by which to conduct personal life. I have further pointed out that secondary education pays little attention to these tasks of adolescent life so that the world of school and the inner world of adolescents tends to fall apart. And I have pointed out that, because of the gap in secondary education, the adolescents get little educational assistance with their struggle to grow up as persons.

I would now like to turn to a quite different aspect of the relationship between adolescents and society: the gap in outlook between most adults and most adolescents. I do not say all adolescents and all adults because there are, of course, exceptions. But recent research suggests that a significant gap in outlook is widespread.

The gap is nobody's fault. It is the result of the speed with which ideas, and society as a whole, have been changing in the last quarter of a century. But, as it is there, we need to study it. What are its main features? As a result of many group discussions with adolescents during the past two years I have gradually come to some conclusions about this which I would like to put before you for your inspection.

One difference seems to me to be that modern adolescents are impatient of the idea that living should be postponed into some indefinite future. They want to live now. In my day it was accepted that you had to do an awful lot of plodding before you could expect to reach a position in life where you could settle back, relax, and enjoy living. So we tended perpetually to postpone living. The pattern we offer adolescents still favours this postponement. What we seem to be saying to the eight-year-old child is "Work hard and then you will win a place in the Grammar School." The successful child, having won his place, is then told "Work hard for the next six years and then you will have a chance of getting to the university." At the university the suggestion is "Work hard for the next three years and then you will get a good degree which will assure you a good job." The job having been obtained, the implication is "Work hard and you will get better and better jobs which will bring you a really good pension when you retire." Eventually, around sixty-five, you are free to start living without pressure — if you haven't forgotten how by then. And, incidentally, many have.

I know I have been exaggerating, but not all that much. What I have been describing is the rat-race which means, by our adolescents' interpretation, giving yourself no time to live until you are too old to enjoy living. Against this they

are in revolt and, even when they subject themselves to it, they think it crazy and often say so. Their attitude seems feckless to many adults. But I for one am not prepared to say that the adults are right and the adolescents wrong. I am inclined to think that many people do live so much in the future that they are not able fully to enjoy the present. Modern adolescents want kicks now; they regard us as square because we seem to take so much thought for the morrow that the glorious opportunities for living now are lost to us. But whoever is right, and whoever wrong, this difference in view about living now, or later, seems to me to mark one of the gaps in understanding between the generations.

Another is closely linked to it. Modern youth believes, devoutly, in self-fulfilment; as against living out someone else's expectations for you. Nothing is more certain to make an adolescent girl wild than the advice from her mother not to do something because of what the neighbours will say. An adolescent boy will be equally riled if his father tells him to "stop looking like a girl and go and get a hair-cut." I am quoting. If the father follows this up by some reference to his old regiment and being smartened up by a spell in the Services he has done just about as much as it is possible to do in three or four sentences to open up an uncrossable abyss between the generations. No-one can say with justice that modern adolescents are either slack in their appearance or lazy in their attitude to life. They give endless attention to being smart in their own terms and apply vast effort when their enthusiasm is aroused. But they are not prepared to dance obediently to the tunes the adults play. They claim that they have the right to be themselves so long as they are not doing anyone else any harm. This claim adults, in general, regard with some suspicion or, at any rate, appear to adolescents to regard with suspicion.

The attitude of the two generations to religion is also considerably different. The modern young are intensely life-affirming. They believe — as I have already said — life is for living. Much of organised religion seems to them to be life-denying. The image of the Church has got this feature about it for them. On the other hand many young people are intensely interested in religion so long as it is not tied up with life-denying beliefs, whereas many adults are indifferent. So here, too, there is little common ground.

The generations are also worlds apart in their views on how to enjoy yourself. Adolescents adore intense personal encounters and probing conversation; adults avoid them. Adult conversation steers clear of "deep" subjects for fear of mutual embarrassment or the arousal of emotions. In adolescent conversation anything goes. An adolescent in a group discussion recently made a comment on how boring his parents' parties seemed as compared with his own. "They never get near one another," he explained — and he

did not mean physically near. He felt that the whole quality of confrontation, person with person, was insipid and dull as compared with the excitement of adolescent confrontation. This was not stated critically — the boy is on excellent terms with his parents — it was stated as a fact.

The last divergence of attitude between the generations I want to mention is the widest of all — the attitude to sex and relationships between the sexes. In these relatively uninhibited times it is natural that parents should be anxious; over against this, modern adolescents are confident of their ability to look after themselves and one another. And it has to be admitted that, in view of their freedom, remarkably few do get into trouble.

What I think we have to bear in mind is that, over the past quarter of a century, Mother Grundy has been constantly in retreat. Except in Spain and a few other places, it is today taken for granted that we shall almost completely undress on the beaches in order to take full advantage of sun and water. We now take it for granted that pleasure in the use of the body is wholesome and good. During the same period birth control has become the accepted practice in marriage of a majority of the population. During the same period again, divorce has become socially respectable. Thus, whether or not we agree with the changes, the whole climate of sex within society has been transformed away from inhibition and towards emancipation during our lifetime. Such changes cannot occur without having a liberating effect that spreads beyond the changes themselves. The adolescents have grown up in this climate; they are "with it." The cautious attitude of the older generation they often regard as an attempt to put back the clock.

I would even go a little further. Some adolescents regard the adult generation as the sex-obsessed one. One boy complained to me that his father never seemed to be able to get sex out of his mind. A girl told me of her shame and embarrassment when her father came into the room, where she was sitting with her boy friend by the fire, and turned on the light. "We were just talking," she complained furiously, "and he had to do that."

I am well aware that there is among some young people today a disturbing amount of sexual irresponsibility and wildness. I shall have a few words to say about this in a minute. But also, and just as plain as the wildness, a new set of standards covering sex relationships is growing up among young people. These are different — far less prudish than formerly — but not, I would say, less responsible. Respect for one another as persons, and regard for one another's well being, and a realistic idealism about what a love relationship involves are replacing the "Thou shalt nots" of an earlier age. I believe

that, in the end, these new values may well lead to a happier, richer family life than the values of prudery which preceded them. Whatever we may think about that, it is a fact that many adolescents consider that we, the older generation, get far too het up about sex. They think our suspicions rather horrid and our anxieties overdone.

The point to notice here is that, by having too little confidence in their values and their common sense, we may easily irritate them so much that they end up, as an act of revolt, in behaving rashly. I am constantly impressed by the wisdom of adolescents who know themselves to be respected and trusted.

These prevailing ideas of modern adolescents which I have been discussing — ideas about living now, about personal fulfilment, about full and frank confrontation of person with person, about religion, and about sex — I would regard as elements in the constructive impact of adolescent freshness upon traditional thought. I do not mean that the adolescents initiate all these ideas but they take them up and build them into their way of life and thought and so prepare for the extension of these ideas throughout society. I think that we of the older generation will be wise to attend to these ideas and see if we can refresh the contents of our minds by contact with them. I do not mean, of course, that we should accept these ideas uncritically but that we should take them seriously, examine them tolerantly, not only because they are signposts to the future but because it is only through sharing in the thoughts of adolescents that we can establish happy co-operative relationships with them. Many teachers and parents know this to be true and apply it in their dealings with young people with great benefit to both sides. To quote a girl: "My parents and I work things out together. There is really nothing to quarrel about — or hardly ever." Or a boy: "I can discuss anything with my parents. I always have." But in my experience the constructive relationship is still comparatively uncommon. The more usual situation between the generations is an uncommunicative, slightly-strained tolerance, or open disagreement.

The adolescents I have in mind, while outlining these conflicts of attitude, are basically co-operative and responsible, however brash and difficult they may appear at times. They are our allies in the creation of a happy, purposeful kind of society, which is our job as adults. In fact, they are far better allies than some people seem to think — so long as we recognise them as allies and value their contribution. Over against this constructively-critical group of adolescents, we have a very difficult set of actively anti-social adolescents — the actual or potential delinquents. What about them?

At present this group is the subject of much study:

Conference follows Conference; book follows book. This is all to the good. I also think it is a little surprising. As one of our leading scientists pointed out recently, if you are out in a storm you do not need to use scientific research in order to prove that it is raining. Similarly, one does not need to search out the minor subtleties in the causation of delinquent behaviour until one has disposed of the obvious ones. In our society there is an obvious cause of delinquency which affects at least 50% of our community — the denial of personal worth.

It is well established that the twin foundations for a sense of personal worth are an awareness of being loved and a sense of being valued in terms of achievement. I do not wish to deal with the first in detail. We all know it is immensely important. I will leave it at that and turn to the second — a sense of achievement. Our society is becoming increasingly competitive. From the age of eight children are liable to be selected into the high flyers, the moderates and the also-rans. Much of the educational system and, after it, the social system is ruthlessly efficient in driving home that we regard the less academically-able as second or third class people. Our initiation system, instead of passing over 90% of the population, as in primitive societies, rejects at least 50%. None of us in this room, I imagine, has been subjected to this kind of rejection in its acute form. We are the lucky ones.

Supposing, instead, you are Johnnie Smith. You are not good enough to be a moderate chance or a certainty in the meritocracy stakes; nor are you bad enough to get the special care now often lavished on the least able children. Instead you are left to sink or swim somewhere in the middle, often in overcrowded classes, often in the care of exhausted teachers, often subjected to an unsuitable curriculum that has little meaning for you and brings you little but failure and futility. Johnnie Smith placed in this position finds, year after year, that what he has to offer seems to be of little value to anyone as compared with what the brighter ones have to offer, whereas he is quite incapable of responding adequately to what society seems to value — the tasks set before him in the class room. Deep within himself Johnnie absorbs the idea that he is composed of inferior stuff. But the years pass. Johnnie acquires size and muscle. He then discovers that he has got something to which society at least pays attention — his strength. Whereupon he begins to worship violence which at one and the same time gives him a sense of importance and permits him to get rid of the frustrations that have been building up over the years.

But Johnnie is not yet lost to us. Supposing that, in spite of the frustrations that have been heaped upon him, he has one or two really good relationships with adults, he may yet be rescued. But suppose on the other hand that Johnnie is not, by the time he is adolescent, on very good terms with

his parents, and supposing his teachers are too harassed and over-worked to give him the persistent personal help and encouragement he needs, what can he do but turn to the last desperate reassurance accorded by the anti-social gang? To that desperate remedy thousands of boys are being forced to turn every year, and for my part I say, "but for the good chances of my circumstances, there go I." We should remember that it is quite impossible to feel responsible in circumstances where we do not also feel of value — personally involved. To the extent that we deny many young people a sense of value and a sense of involvement, we create delinquents in generation after generation of children. Until these obvious weaknesses in our society are cleared up, no number of Conferences, researches and University Departments of Criminology — however excellent in their way — can much affect the recurring, and increasing, problem of the anti-social Johnnie Smiths within our society.

What about Jane Smith? Just as Johnnie grows into a new significance through developing muscle so does Jane grow into a new significance through developing sex appeal. Just as Johnnie is liable to pin all his hopes for personal prestige on violence so Jane is liable to pin all her hopes on sex. The little madams of our secondary schools are not to be found among the more successful adolescents but among the least successful. Many of the little madams themselves have sufficient sense and know-how to keep out of serious trouble, but the unsuccessful admirers of the little madams are highly vulnerable. Not very attractive physically, but forced by rejection elsewhere to over-value sex, they seek any boy or man friend and then hang on to him grimly. Such girls are helpless before any male who offers them a show of affection. Until we give such girls either an alternative source of self-assurance or a thorough instruction in birth control, the number of adolescent pregnancies is likely to increase. What the girls most need, obviously is an alternative source of self-assurance. Lacking this they are, I think, often driven into rash sexual experiments by an unconscious desire to find in motherhood an assured sense of value. Such girls are brought into trouble not by sexual desire but by the woman in them — by their hungry hearts.

I would like to invite you to differentiate between the first group of adolescents I was talking about — those who are socially orientated but are challenging us on several fronts — and this other group I have just mentioned: the adolescents who feel rejected by our society and fall back upon violence or sex for reassurance. It seems to me that these groups are often confused and that our thinking about adolescents in society is sometimes blurred because they are. That adolescents should challenge is good for them and for us; that they should feel under-valued and rejected is good for nobody.

What can we do as responsible adults to help adolescents

grow up into mature personalities? In broad terms they have themselves given us a clear indication about where we can assist. They do not want our preaching, and they will not stand for any attempt at domination, but they do value our understanding guidance. A sample of over 5,000 adolescents was asked whether they would like to discuss their own problems with adults. Ninety per cent replied in the affirmative. They are, in fact, waiting for our help but they cannot, in the nature of things, accept the guidance they need and want if it is offered in a form that they feel threatens their striving for self-determination. They want our help in their struggle, not a blue-print from us about how they should live their lives. Remember that their need to establish themselves as independent personalities during adolescence precludes our being able to tell them. On this rock much well-meaning advice founders. "She won't be told," the parents complain. The self-same daughter complains in her turn: "They won't listen to me." That common condition of stalemate means the end of any hope of acceptable guidance.

Our starting point, then, must be sympathetically to enter, as far as we are able, the adolescents' own world. We have to realise that growing up to maturity in our high-pressure, confusing times is not easy. We also have to understand the nature of the adolescent's tasks, to appreciate that the most absorbing interests of adolescent life are the struggle for independence, the striving to gain and keep friends and make a sufficient impression on one's own group, the urge to succeed in establishing relationships with the other sex, the incentive to prove oneself through recognised achievement, and the effort to arrive at values and standards by which to live. If the adolescent can recognise in us people who will help him surmount these tasks of life then he, or she, will eagerly turn to us for support, encouragement and guidance.

Having arrived at the attitude which permits useful communication between the generations to take place, we have then to provide the opportunity for discussion. This is a job for homes, schools and clubs. A mother who seems to be getting on extremely well with her pair of adolescents told me, "If either of them seems to want to talk about something then I drop everything and we get down to it. If you don't take the opportunity when it happens, it's too late." At any secondary school on any day there are probably ten or twenty children who are in urgent need of adult sympathy and guidance. They need a sympathetic teacher, time to talk, and a place where a private talk is possible. You cannot expect a girl or boy with an acute personal problem to make an appointment. Children in real difficulties are often the last ones to come forward and ask for the help they need. Something more immediately available than a talk with the Head Teacher when the Head Teacher has time should be built into our secondary school system. At present secondary schools are neither

designed nor staffed with any realisation that adolescents need opportunities for private personal help when things get too much for them. To provide such facilities is good educational economics. You cannot expect any useful work out of an adolescent who is bearing quite alone the brunt of acute depression, the hurt of a broken friendship, or the disturbance resulting from deadlock with an obstinate father — to mention only three sources of tension and anxiety.

In addition, the problems of adolescents can also be dealt with in groups. Providing the teacher or youth leader who takes the group is sympathetic, permissive and good humoured, adolescents will quickly raise in discussion all kinds of general adolescent problems. Such discussions are of great value both to the adolescents and to the adults concerned. A Head Mistress who provides time for general discussions among her fourteen and fifteen-year-old girls tells me that some of the members of her staff were suspicious of the whole idea at first but are now won right over because these discussions have greatly deepened their insight into the lives of their pupils and so have produced better relations, and better work in other lessons.

Of course one must not make the thing too self-conscious. A session called "Personal Problems" will make everybody dry up. One labelled, "Modern Problems" and dealing with everything, as it crops up, from congestion on the roads to sex education, will get discussion going easily. Some excellent discussions can also go under the umbrella of Religious Instruction or Domestic Science. The vital thing is that opportunities for discussing the problems of growing up in the modern world shall be readily available. In youth clubs, the informal discussion seems much more productive than the discussion laid on about some set theme.

This serving of adolescent personal growth can, and I suggest should, be taken deeper still into the curriculum. English, History and Geography all lend themselves to approaches that will bring young people not only a greater understanding of their world but also of themselves. To do this is not to reduce the amount of solid work done, but greatly to increase the incentive to work hard. For example, it has been abundantly proved that adolescents whose feelings have been stirred produce much better

written work than those who have been merely instructed in cold blood. Science too, can be humanised by bringing out that all science is the accumulated achievement of individuals who, each in his place and time, struggled to push back the frontiers of ignorance. We are hearing a good deal at university level to-day about the philosophy of science; in our secondary schools what we need is more of the romance of science, including the romance of mathematics. If we seek to educate adolescents well, so that they learn and grow, we have to reach not only their intellects but also their hearts and their imaginations.

Finally, we can help adolescents to grow up by providing them with opportunities to make a contribution to the life of their neighbourhood. They are eager to be of use. But, here again, we cannot just heap chores on them; we have to touch their idealism, challenge their courage. It is a terribly sad thing that young men are forced into manufacturing artificial risks — like doing a ton on a motor-cycle — because society fails to provide the kind of adventure and challenge that the young relish.

Of course the lost ones — those who depend utterly on violence or sex — are particularly in need of our help, but for them the best ultimate solution is prevention. We have to capitalise our less-well-endowed children — with more teachers, with better opportunities — so that they do not grow up the enemies of what we hold dear in our civilisation, but young people of good heart because they feel assured of a valued place in society.

I have been quite unsubtle this evening. I have just pointed out the obvious. But I am convinced that most of the problems between adolescents and society would clear away if we would pay more attention to the obvious. In our modern adolescents we have a magnificent reserve of health, strength and ability. It is only a menace if we frustrate it. Instead we must learn to co-operate with it. I have tried to put before you some of the factors upon which successful co-operation depends. This theme is, I hope, appropriate to this occasion, for we are here commemorating a life of dedication to the well-being of young people. This dedication was rooted in a belief in the young. This we should emulate. We shall get much nearer to our adolescents, in fruitful contact if we have confidence in them than if we do not.