

Lady Albemarle's boys.

By Ray Gosling

A Young Fabian publication, January 1961

An autobiography by Ray Gosling.

**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)**



## LADY ALBEMARLE'S BOYS

by Ray Gosling

A Young Fabian publication, January 1961

### 1. Introduction

I WAS born in Northampton in 1939. My mother was a school teacher and her parents were farm hands from Cambridgeshire. My father is a motor mechanic. I was brought up in the semi-detached house my parents bought on the borough boundary. I won a scholarship to the local grammar school, and in 1958 I progressed to a provincial university to read English. I stayed there for one year only, but in that year I discovered 'The Town', found friends on the academic staff — and a growing dislike for the student body. It was during my discovery of 'The Town', which took me over six months, that I was asked by a teenage rock 'n' roll band if I would 'carry the can' for them, and help them to stage their own show. They wanted to organise their own show, a show not subject to the dictates of a Working Men's Club or a Youth Organisation.

So I progressed over a period of well over a year from administrating a series of rock 'n' roll dances at considerable financial loss, to administrating a youth club operating at a considerable profit. It is a youth club controlled by a committee of the town's 'hard core' — 12 young men and women who dictate the operation of the club. It is open for well over 12 hours a day, and at the time of writing has a permanent staff of three, and myself; none of whom are over 22. I do not lead the club. I direct it according to the wishes of the members.

I have been struck during my work by the grossly ill-informed general public, who seem to have little or no knowledge of the Service of Youth, or of the habits and behaviour of the younger generation. I consider it necessary, therefore, to sketch the history of this remarkable service. I hope those not used to a staccato style will bear with me.

'Lady Albemarle's Boys', the first publication by the Young Fabians, was written by Ray Gosling at the age of 21. A former student at Leicester University, he was then general secretary of Leicester City Youth Venture, the first self-programming youth club set up in the wake of the Albemarle Report. Now a successful freelance journalist and broadcaster he is the author of several books, the latest of which, 'Personal Copy: A Memoir of the Sixties', is published by Faber and Faber.

### 2. History

#### THE FIVE STAGES IN THE SERVICE OF YOUTH

##### 1. Scouting for Boys

The 1890's — young people in slums — malnutrition — lack of fresh air — and ardent Christian gentlemen were disturbed. The cream of the nation was withering away.

Something had to be done.

And so there arose the Boys' Brigade, the Boy Scout Movement, etc., etc.; all to make young people from poor homes healthy in body, in mind, and in soul.

The outdoor life is the answer — first aid, the reef knot, burnt bacon, the camp fire, wet blankets.

The result — good, fine, upstanding men; worthy citizens of our Christian Empire.

The boys in one field: the girls in another.

At 12, 13, 14 it's wonderful fun, and very good training, particularly for those offspring of caring parents from the semi-detached. A life of church parades, the Bible, the reef knot and the left-hand shake is very good for a young lad. He will probably never get the chance again.

It is a great pity that the sons of the people are sometimes inhibited from enrolling in these noble movements. I have found most of the workers in these movements hard working, dedicated, and rather out of touch with England of 1960.

And the HQ. Staff: Boy Scouts (Incorporated). Chief Scout: Major Sir Charles Fitzroy Maclean, Bart.; Boys' Brigade (Incorporated). Secretary: Major-General D. J. Wilson-Haffenden, C.B.E.

No comment.

If I have a son, I shall not discourage him from joining this type of organisation. It is obviously a very good cause, doing a wonderful job of work, primarily for the under fifteens. And it does give a great deal of fun, and provides sensible training for a large number of very young people.

## 2. No Mean City — The 1930s

The cream of the nation were no longer merely a physical problem. It was not burnt bacon and first aid that were needed. There was a social problem. There was no work. Something had to be done for the deprived, the poor, the under-privileged, the great have-nots.

We must keep the kiddies off the streets. We must give them something to do. And enter as effective forces for the first time the National Association of Boys' Clubs, the National Association of Mixed Clubs and Girls' Clubs, the University Settlements — Undergraduates, Graduates (for one year only), retired military personnel, ardently believing that they had something to offer the younger generation.

And so, today, poor, deprived and under-privileged children are taken by train from Shoreditch to Cambridge. They listen in awe to King's College Chapel organ. They have tea in a Cambridge College; walk by the banks of the Cam. And then home by train to their club life — the table tennis team and operation manhood.

The official journal of the N.A.B.C. is entitled 'The Challenge Incorporating the Boy' — no, not the girl. "That would upset everything we are trying to do".

And what is that?

Take the Venture Clubs now existing in London, the Midlands and Lancashire.

What do they do?

A body is hidden in a barn fifty miles away. You lads must find a blue button in the left pocket of the trousers of this dummy. Here are a list of clues to help you find the location. I shall expect you back before midnight.

Recently a stir was created in a Midlands town when one of these lads was injured while hitch-hiking in search of the blue button. One of the club leaders in charge of one of these schemes told me: "It's the most exciting thing we've thought up yet. It's the mainstay of this club. It challenges the whole of the boy".

## 1935 — The Jubilee Year

And there arose the King George's Jubilee Trust, 166 Piccadilly, W.1. Secretary (1960), Major-General T. N. F. Wilson, C.B., D.S.O., M.C. Objects: 'the advancement of the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of the younger generation'.

Note the word 'welfare'. These organisations are not affiliated to any particular denomination. They are broadly Christian. And on the 27th of November, 1939, from the Board of Education, came the great battle cry to all men and women doing good for young people — Circular 1486 — the circular which set into motion as a branch of the Further Education Department at the Board, later the Ministry, of Education — the Service for Youth (in the dative case only).

'But the service of youth, too long a neglected part of the educational field, today assumes a new significance in the

nation's life, and the Board are confident that local education authorities will do all in their power to meet this challenge'. The Ministry have always been remarkably confident that 'this challenge' would be met by the Local Education Authorities.

The facts in the appendix to the Albemarle Report show just how far that confidence has been treated; and yet the Albemarle Report is confident that the L.E.A.s and voluntary organisations should consider what approaches they can make to these young people who find it difficult to come to terms with society. The Service of Youth came into being in 1939 with objects: 'The social and physical development of boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 20'.

Note again: 60 per cent of the total membership of existing 'youth organisations' (2½ million) is under 15. That is, still engaged in full-time education.

## 3. Biggles And The War

One assumes that the military personnel concerned had little time for youth work while engaged in winning the war. However, for the first time in the history of the youth service, there was a contact between the service and its subjects, the young people.

The Air Training Corps, the Combined Cadet Force, the Sea Cadets enjoyed a success as purely pre-service training units that the para-military organisations of before and after the war never saw. There was a purpose in the first aid, in the training to be tough, and the operation Manhood courses.

It is such a pity that the spirit of the Biggles age has died in all but a few of the very best public schools. But this change of mood from war to peace does perhaps explain the failure of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme in appealing to the ordinary lad, while retaining its great success with the nation's 'élite'. In times of peace it appears that the ordinary lad does not wish to prove himself in feats of organised, manly, and clean efforts of physical or mental endurance. Perhaps it is only the nation's 'élite' who have to prove themselves in this way.

## 4. Richard Hoggart And The Milk Bar Boys

The mid-twentieth century.

The youth service is out in the cold. Frustrated youth workers and their ideas! From a youth worker, 1949: "ultimately ethical teaching is not enough, and if nothing more than this is allowed to be taught it must be taught in such a way as will kindle an interest in spiritual values". The big question mark was: 'Is there a case for youth only; a group outside both home, school and work?'

And the big answers: blackboard jungle, the teddy boy gang, rock around the clock, the milk bar boys, Elvis Presley, Mr. Larry Parnes cashes in; frothy coffee and the juke box.

The youth workers: 'To anyone entrusted with the task of youth, leadership is the test of ability inspired by the right motives'. The Ministry: Labour Government, Tory Government, and one penny in the pound was spent on the youth service from the total education grant of the Ministry.

The Jackson Committee, 1949: 'Report of the Committee on Recruitment, Training and Conditions of Service of Youth Leaders and Community Centre Wardens'.

Fletcher Committee, 1951: 'The Recruitment and Training of Youth Leaders and Community Centre Wardens'. Circulars from the Ministry related to the formation of trusts, and the use of parochial and church halls. In spite of official apathy, some people were concerned.

And so, 'Do let's start a teen canteen'. The approach was informal, and the attitude — let's forget all these high ideals (temporarily). Let's get them off the streets and keep them out of the pubs. These poor young things; they have nowhere to go.

## 5. And Then Along Came Jones

The Absolute Beginner. The teenager to replace the teddy boy, the jeune voyou, the blousons noirs, the halberstarken, this teenage thing, this Great Big Us fighting for no reason at all the Great Big Them. We despise the masses, the Labour Party and the working class; we have a world of our own. Keep out. With Larry Parnes solving the sturm und drang of adolescence, with the world of mass entertainments, the teenage racket had arrived.

Superimposed on the Fifties staccato of violence came the new Dionysus, the wanted boy, the sex crucified boy and the cuddly kid. The girls moved down the hit parade, and in came the Boom for Boys, the Big Time that hit Manchester, the Provinces, the Midlands, Metropolitan England and Suburban England, and yet strangely missed Liverpool, the North East, and the West. And now we have young person 1960. Dreaming of being a Boy-God, or being in love with a Boy-God, but having special, professional interests. He is genned up, jazzed up, and on the ball. He is anti-home, anti-community. It is undramatic to be seen at work. The large-scale focus is on leisure.

In Great Britain today there are five million unmarried teenagers (15-25). It is interesting to notice that Dr. Mark Abrams' division in the London Press Exchange pamphlet 'The Teenage Consumer' was not the accepted one of 14-20, but the much more realistic division of 'after school' and 'before settling down'. The total uncommitted spending power of these teenagers is £900,000,000, of which 25 per cent goes on clothing, 14 per cent on alcohol and tobacco, 14 per cent on the pops — records, movies, tapes, etc., 12 per cent on coffee bars, cafés and snacks.

It is noticeable that over the past twelve months there has been a decline in the sale of popular records. The really genned up young person, while he may dream of being the Boy-God a la Larry Parnes, is finding specialised entertainment more in tune with his present mood. The tape recorder or L.P. album records are preferred to Elvis Presley. The trend is towards the origins of popular music rather than the actual project.

And then hard on the teenage thing and the teenage racket came the Albemarle Report, the all-embracing service of youth, and the new conception of a youth business. New and large scale organisations, seeing a teenage racket created from young men in tight jeans, found it logical to assume that a youth business could be run on the same lines. If one started with a juke box, it might be possible to cure the 'social evil'.

"You see what I thought was, well, you see, when my Johnny was in trouble with the police I found out that it was only because he hadn't got anywhere to go. And so I opened out my own front room and said to my Johnny, 'Bring all your friends in. Do what you want and make as much noise as you like. Have a ball'. And believe it or not, it worked. My Johnny became a good boy, and I thought: if this can happen to my Johnny, then it can happen to every Johnny".

A reaction to this from a young person: 'I tell yer, I do. The Government and all the la-di-da's they're going into this youth business in a big way and it ain't for us. I tell yer. We're the bloody suckers all over again'.

Associated with this youth business movement there has arrived a new 'let them run wild' brigade; 'there's nothing wrong with British youth today that a little tolerance won't cure; it's the public and the police that are all in the wrong'. Let us pander to popular taste, let us become a hep cat and not a square, and then they will listen to us when we tell them not to hit Granny over the head.

And juvenile delinquency?

It does exist. It is a problem. The deep reservoir of decent intention is no longer so obviously apparent in young people.

Some organisations have been, and are, highly successful. They appeal to the young people. They are in contact and they care. The Young Conservatives, run by the young people for the young people, are in contact with the idiom of the 1960's. There is a sense of power; you can get on in the Young Tories. They are not a cure for a social evil, not a welfare service, nor are they doing good, nor do they aim at being the centre of young people's lives. They are a socialising influence for a particular and exclusive section of society, and they fit into the contemporary pattern as a part of it, and not as a centre for it. The same can be applied to the Young Farmers, the Youth Theatre, and to certain clubs for specialised skills: sailing, mountaineering, etc.

It is interesting that many of the clubs for the mentally or socially retarded in the depressed or backward areas of the country are highly successful in giving people something to do. I can quote clubs in Liverpool and in parts of London that are absolutely first class in this respect. The successful clubs seem to be those with the class stigma — honest working class, or upper middle class.

The failure to contact is most apparent in the clubs that aim at catering for the ordinary, average social being of today. Club organisers and leaders do not seem to have cottoned on to the mental attitude of young people in a booming Britain. The highly successful clubs all contain an element of exclusiveness, of professionalism; whereas the average youth organisation caters for all comers, rather than catering professionally for the particular.

It is not out of place to quote a Model Branch Programme for the Young Socialists:

A lecture on the meaning of Socialism.  
Hike and Barbecue.  
Lecture on Local Government.  
Music Night — Chopin.  
Modern Jazz followed by Hot Dogs and Coffee.  
Harvest Dance at Labour Hall.

Here are a host of general, and mixed, activities — many of which are far better done by professional and specialised organisations; and this is in an organisation that exists for a specific activity.

Whatever the faults there are in the Albemarle Report and in the Labour Party's policy statement 'The Younger Generation', they pointed out, very strongly, that there is an urgent need for the professional and specialist rather than the general, all embracing and amateur.

### 3. The Albemarle Report

"The Committee was appointed by the Minister of Education in November, 1958. We were given 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 of life in 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 according to what priorities best value can be obtained for the money spent'."

The Albemarle Committee saw itself as a 'charting committee', to revive the youth service, and to set a broad pattern for future developments. This it has done, and done admirably. Without the climate of opinion that has followed the Report, and the additional cash made available by the Minister of Education, there is little doubt that schemes such as the one I am involved in would find the going very rough indeed. The Albemarle Report was the start, and not the end — and from it there must be progress, criticism, a moving forward. Its success will be measured by the quality and quantity of the experiment and construction which follows.

"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 the codes of behaviour or appearance which to the younger generations have become meaningless. Moral indignation is best kept for what is really 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".

However good the Albemarle Committee and its Report were, there are areas of dispute that can be criticised in the Report — and that must be considered sooner or later in post-Albemarle policy.

#### (a) The Age Range

The Service of Youth concerned itself with the age range 15-20. Grants were made on the basis that a majority of members of the club would be between 15 and 20. This hit the traditional youth organisations, 60 per cent of whose total membership was under 15. Albemarle recommended change:

"We therefore recommend that the Service shall be available to all young people aged 14-20 inclusive. There might be a case for reconsidering the lower age limit if and when the school leaving age is raised".

This lowering of the age limit is of great help to the traditional youth organisations, but for work among the non-traditional elements of youth one must bear in mind other definitions of young person. The key to the house is 21. The age bracket for most teenage research and marketing is 15-25. Teenagers don't stop at 20. In spite of earlier marriage, teenage society on all levels ends somewhere between 22 and 25. By 25 one has usually completed one's schooling and National Service; one's raughting days or apprenticeship; one's courtship, and emotional adjustment. One has, by 25, become a man or woman. At 25 the teenage star is either past it, an old timer, or an evergreen; but up to 25 one is usually able to keep up with the times. The gang leaders are usually aged

between 18 and 22. The sensational teenage murder and robbery cases have culprits between 15 and 25. The influence of the over 20's on the under 20's is considerable.

The age limit for the Service of Youth should be raised to 25. It should be on a parallel with other branches of the further education service, and not with secondary education. Today's youth is not only starting younger, but finishing later. The glories of being a teenager are not easily given up.

#### (b) The Specialised Nature Of The Youth Service

"... Denominational or specifically committed organisations must remain free to give expression to their spiritual ideals in their youth work. For the Youth Service as a whole, however, we think that this way of embodying aims is mistaken ..."

The Report was wonderfully vague on the dividing line between the specifically committed organisations, and the general social ones. Political organisations could not be eligible for a grant. Denominational ones were questioned, and those with a specific interest which overrode special aims did not receive the attention they should have done.

#### (c) The Position Of Youth Leaders

##### Voluntary Helpers

"There are great numbers of people who are willing to give up their time to meet and talk with young people, and to help with the activities of youth groups, clubs and centres. The motives which have urged them to take up work in the Service are varied, but we are struck by the real concern for young people and the desire to help them, at whatever the cost, which characterises most of these voluntary workers. It is vital for young people to understand that many of the older generation are genuinely anxious to make friends and to share their interests".

Is the youth service to be a service for the old who linger after their lost youth, or is it to be a professional body of skilled workers in one field or another? Schools, universities, the W.E.A., commercial organisations, do not make use in such a haphazard manner of people whose qualifications are merely a concern and desire to help. This just is not good enough. There must be youth workers whose skills lie in the specific and the professional. And there must be those whose skill lies in the people who are their clientele.

The amateurs can visit, but work — please! Who is the service for?

This once again shows up the Report as failing to make the division between the skilled in the specific, be it sailing, soccer or Methodism; and the skilled in social administration and work. And not once does the Report mention that voluntary helpers could be the young people themselves, in particular the over 20's. Their participation is requested. Their leadership is needed; but their status as administrators or even voluntary helpers is not seriously considered.

##### The Leader

Here again I disagree. The concept of the leader, as a leader, is applied universally to almost all types of club. After agreeing that "this is a professional service which of its nature is episodic rather than a life-time career", they say that in future only officially trained leaders should qualify for official recognition.

And what will this training consist of? "Leadership studies; practical work, personal skills" — the three qualities that repel the 60 per cent of young people whom the report suggests must be attracted by the new service.

No consideration was given to natural leaders — publicans, coffee house managers, etc. — and their effect and influence on young people. There are also natural leaders who should be able to qualify for official recognition for a two to five year period, but after move away from the service, their usefulness completed. Different clubs require different types of leader — some need the officially trained, others would have to shun them. These questions and problems were not considered. And what type of person is envisaged as being suitable for the conversion into youth leader? Teachers, social workers, and mature persons with a natural gift for leadership. The whole concept of leadership must be reviewed and fully investigated as soon as possible before the National Training College for Youth Leaders becomes set in its ways.

#### **(d) Youth Culture And Structure**

"We have tried . . . to look at the world as young people see it". Most of the information on young people comes from the organisations working in the service, and the research organisations and independent observers were not called in, apart from Mark Abrams, to factuate their chapter on Young People Today.

The Report talks of a new approach to the 'unclubbed', and the failure of the present service to meet their needs. ". . . There is, of course, some variety of method, but there is less willingness than we should have hoped to break new ground. The type of boy or girl aimed at tends to be the same". Yet investigation into the present social life of the unclubbed by the Committee is far less thorough than that of Dr. MacAllister Brew in 'Service of Youth'; and so the findings they make are often inaccurate.

#### **(e) Structure Of The Club**

No consideration was given to this whatsoever. "There should be among these older boys many who, if properly prompted, might play an important part in the running of existing organisations and of those self-programming groups. . . ." But what part are they to play?

". . . We should like to see more responsibility for activities and programmes turned over to the young wherever this can be made possible, and real and actual charge of things within their compass (or just enough outside it to make them stretch their minds) given to them . . ." But how? And in what sort of structure? What sort of club?

Management committees, supporters' clubs, youth participation are considered, but the degree to which these should be used, and under what conditions, are not considered.

The suggestions of the use of schools and community centres are not explored sufficiently to discover the type of young person these buildings might be likely to attract — or repel.

The relations of the Ministry to the Local Authority; the National Voluntary Organisations and the Local Voluntary Organisations are left unclear. Efforts at co-ordination of the various types of work within the service are not considered.

## **4. The Service of Youth, 1960**

In general terms it stinks from the top brass to the workers in the field. Its only possible justification is the few, very isolated bright spots of experimental and specialist work, and the great fund of unusable good intentions.

The Top Brass: A contrast can be made between the title and name of the general secretary for the Students' Union — Phyllis Savage, and the names of the headquarters staff in youth movements that have already been mentioned. Why are all these military personnel engaged in the service of youth in such very large numbers?

The Military on the Albemarle Committee: "That committee's nothing but a load of teddy boys".

### **And In The Field**

In the field are the leaders, the little bosses of the little clubs. They can be divided into two broad divisions:

(a) The honest, old-fashioned welfare workers. The evangelist, the enquiring, the searching for good works to do. Those people who go into the coffee bars to try to reach the 'teddy boy', as if they were going into a jungle.

The "I've always been interested in youth" brigade; the do-gooders; the trying hard corps; the saving young girls from fatal steps. The apologetic. "You must come again. It's such a pity that you came on a slack night".

The frightened and the conscious: "You see they talk to me, but all the time I feel they don't trust me".

The dedicated and the realists: "Oh, but you have to expect trouble. A gang came in from the cafe across the road last night, and absolutely wrecked my club. You must expect this sort of thing".

Those whom young people grow upon, until helping young people fulfills a need in the youth worker more than the youth worker fulfills a need in young people.

The sociologists: "Stop being destructive. Haven't you any suggestions?"

Leave them alone.

"But you can't, my dear, they're a social problem".

(b) The second broad division includes the dishonest both to themselves and their subjects and their work; the pretentious; those who believe that they know all the answers; that young people find it so easy to get on with them; that they can get on with young people so very well.

The Military: "And what about the team spirit? Do they all rally round?" The proud that they're all so tough: "Oh, but they're all teddy boys. We've organised a committee, and he's the only one who hasn't been to Borstal". (Spoken with glee.)

The martyrs in the cause of youth: "Spent all my life with young people".

The sporty: "It does so help to be good at sport. Keep them active. Give them something to do".

The worldly: "Must show an interest in a pair of girl's legs. Shows you're human, too, eh what?"

The theorists:

"I've spent all my life with boys".

But what about the girls?

"Oh, they'd simply wreck all the work we've done in building up our table tennis team".

But don't you think the first interest of girls is the boy?

"If I may say so, old boy, you've hit the nail right on the head. That's why I won't let them in".

These quotes have not been included for their own intrinsic value, but because they are all examples of the patronising, devoted attitude of responsible and mature persons who are attempting to lead the youth of the nation in general. I hope that they give some idea of the stifling atmosphere in which young people are in general catered for in the service of youth.

The pandering to popular taste is, I think, the very worst aspect of the new bright youth service of today. Royston Ellis, the teenage beatnik 'poet', is a friend of Cliff Richard, and therefore as a symbol of our cultural heritage he can be held up as a great teenager by the N.A.B.C. magazine *Challenge*. The attitude is that culture, education, 'operation manhood', must now be approached from the lowest level of young people. The 'bitter pill of self-advancement' must be sugar coated with 'modern jazz followed by hot-dogs, and COFFEE'; religion must be covered up with 'rock 'n' roll'.

## False Contact

There is a genuine desire among youth organisers for the necessary contact with young people to be established on their own level. It is a pity that those practising this attitude fail to understand the contact at any other than a superficial level. The contact is attempted in fear of the young people. You must never say you don't like rock 'n' roll. You must never say that you can only listen to the classics.

These youth organisers seem to fail to realise that young people, more than any other section of the community, are very conscious of their dignity, not only as young people, but as human beings. They are not a bunch of idiots. They demand the genuine, the honest. Respect must be given not only to the taste of the young person, but more importantly to the taste of the person making contact. The young person is not a young thing, a teenager, a social misfit, a social worker's case book, nor someone to feel sorry for, someone in need of help. The young person is an individual in a complex society. He does not wish to be considered as a young person, but as a character, an individual.

The relationship between a young person and a youth leader must not be the one of pupil to teacher; worker to boss; apprentice to master; or son to father — but of consumer to supplier — and the supplier must be like a novelist, an accomplice on the inside and a witness on the outside — in sympathy with the demands of his consumer, but able to stand apart and see his client, consumer, his character in perspective. One of the failings of the Albemarle Report was that it gave no consideration to the relationships between the youth leader, or the supplier, and the young person, the consumer.

# 5. The Albemarle Report and the Younger Generation

The affinity between the Report published by the Albemarle Committee and the Report from the Labour Party's Youth Commission is remarkable. Both ask for more money for the existing youth service, and experimental extensions to it. Neither questions whether the existing youth service is suitable for teenager 1960. Both thought that the 'hot dogs and coffee', the jazzing up of the service would attract the required numbers of the late teens. Both gave no consideration to the administrative structure of youth clubs; and neither thought up any alternative structure for different sections of the young community.

But they have both done their jobs — to focus attention on the youth service, to give it a higher priority for cash from the Ministry. As preliminary reports they were admirable. It is a pity that the Labour Party's thinking was only a few months in advance of the Government's — and their thoughts were indistinguishable. It is a greater pity that so many in the youth service see these reports as final documents from which to work.

What I shall now attempt to do is to put forward some suggestions for a more constructive policy; suggestions that I think should be gone into at length, more thoroughly, as soon as possible by the competent authorities.

Young people today can be divided into six categories; and two major divisions:

A1. The students who are catered for in a much more high-powered organisation than any other section of young people in both their work and leisure time activities.

A2. The lone wolves who are quite happy and content provided they are left alone. Not every young person has leisure time in the accepted sense. The future policy maker must remember to leave this section alone. Not all young people wish to be socialised.

A3. Those with specific ties — with home, a girl friend, a particular all-absorbing interest. These too must not be tampered with. They are quite content. Their wish to be left alone must be respected.

And there are those who the youth service can, and should, cater for.

B1. Those in need of training. There are young people who want a service FOR youth; who want to be trained in good citizenship, in membership of a Christian community. They want to be taken on a scout camp, and learn to tie reef knots, and to cook. The Albemarle Report seems to have had a sadly depressing effect on these organisations. They seem to be under the impression that all the extra money will go out to the teddy boys. Nothing could be further from the truth. But the wonderful work they are, and have been doing for generations, is going unnoticed and so they remain in general in the same pre-Albemarle state of despondency. More money is urgently needed for clubs of this kind. And it is time that the age limit of 15 was further relaxed to enable in particular the Boy Scouts, to successfully apply for increased grants.

B2. Those with specific interests. This is a problem that increased cash will help, but will not solve on its own. There is a class and moneyed stigma attached to many of these clubs with a specific interest. Sailing, pony trekking, mountaineering, etc., are still leisure-time pastimes for

those in the right sets. A girl told me that she would have to join the Young Conservatives if she was to continue her sailing without being victimised.

A system of grants must be introduced to enable the membership of these clubs to be broadened. But the broadening will be a policy resisted most strongly by the clubs themselves. A system will have to be devised to enable young people to use these facilities freely; perhaps grants made to the clubs if they will offer to help and train a set number of young people who want, but cannot afford, to use their facilities. But their exclusive nature must be preserved. There is something about the exclusive club that will appeal to all young people. Haphazard broadening of membership could be fatal.

B3. The last category is the leisure-time club: and here we hit the great problem — the 60 per cent who at present don't want to join youth clubs, those to whom the youth service no longer appeals, and yet in whom the community spirit is traditionally strong.

### **Faulty Structure**

The principal fault lies in the structure of the clubs. The young people concerned do not like the existing youth clubs. And this dislike is not the failure of the youth service to get all hep. It is often the hep club that disappoints. This get-hep movement is the failing of so much Albemarle and post-Albemarle thinking. The reason for the failure of these clubs goes deeper. 'The youth of today are just sick and tired of the vicar-type youth club which we have now. People think that we haven't any minds of our own and that we need some older and more intelligent man to look after us'.

If the youth club is to be all rock 'n' roll then please let it be professional; and in a professional rock 'n' roll club today there is no need for state aid. The '2 I's' coffee bar in Old Compton Street is in its way a successful youth club; but it must not be the task of the Ministry of Education to foster such clubs on similar lines. If they do, they might as well nationalise them. They have a value for the young person with the specific interest.

What is needed is a club for the ordinary consumer, the average young person of 1960 that will give dignity, independence, and power; that will provide a socialising influence on the lives of its customers. The Government's aim must not degenerate into better and better rock 'n' roll — but integration of an isolated section of the community into a responsible society. Aid must be given to create a society by the young consumer for the young consumer; a world of their own integrated and taking its place in the larger and wider world. In integrating this section of society, it is high time that adult society showed its faith in the non-student population in the same manner as it does with the students.

The Students' Union is a high-powered relatively rich set of organisations run by the students for the students. It is high time that the remaining large section of young people was offered the same, under similar conditions. The Students' Union Movement is often praised for the part it plays in the life of the student in fitting him or her for the integrated world outside. How much more could an organisation catering for young people not in full-time education play in integrating a section of society that is out of tune with its fellows, in integrating that section into a whole.

Young people are sick of those hasty, hackneyed words, 'youth', 'juvenile'; and are sick of that band of people who are 'dedicated', 'devoted', to the service of youth, as they

see it. What is required is a large-scale demonstration of faith by the adult population in the non-student younger generation.

There exists a very conscious and well-organised group of young people who react strongly to consciously planned group activity, simply because it has been planned for them and not by them. This younger generation finds itself ground between the millstones of technocracy and democracy, coping with a natural dooming sense of failure in a disenchanted age that is rapidly losing its moral reference. And society as a whole is not prepared to dole out the faith necessary if this generation is to become socially responsible.

## **6. Bridging the Gap Between Care and Connection**

On the one hand are those of Them who, having found the mood of this young generation, and realised its commercial value, connect, for their own benefit. These people who connect only rarely care; and then only when necessary. They rarely understand their consumers. Their research into young people revolves around how gullible they are likely to prove. Like the supermarkets, they gain the good faith of their patrons by purely superficial means. The mistake they make is in thinking that their patrons are not conscious of their methods.

On the other side, are the Them who are assumed to be caring for young people; the youth leaders who are as out of contact with the superficial elements in their patrons' patterns of life, as they are of the reasons behind it. These amateurs rely on their bottomless fund of good intentions. Like the Co-operative Societies, they exist to give their patrons recreation, relaxation, education and integration, but they fail to connect, to create the necessary good faith.

The Left must be bold. It must state categorically that this type of young person must be given a youth service in the genitive case. Like the working men's clubs, the co-ops., the students' unions, youth clubs of this type must be run by the young people for the young people. The task of those elders and betters must be to help, when called upon to do so; and not to guide, still less to dictate. I have often thought that it might be of help if the individual club was affiliated direct to a central youth service, and not via a voluntary organisation. I have always found the officials at the Ministry far more perceptive and sympathetic than the heads, often part time, of the voluntary organisations.

And it must be understood by the general public that this would not be the end of the 'barneys', the street fights. It couldn't be — freshers will always be freshers; undergrads will always be undergrads; teds will always be teds. But what must be done is to bridge this gap between the caring unconnecting and uncaring connecting.

### **And The Result?**

Virgins may be raped. A club may have the reputation of a public brothel. Stolen goods may be received. Thieves and murderers may have a hideout. Decent folk may be intimidated. Teenage prostitution may have a place from which to operate.

But in spite of this, from an unorganised world of their own, will emerge an organised world of their own, governed by themselves, integrated into responsible

society. The milkman will have to be paid. They will be responsible to those who put up the money. Responsible to their bankers, auditors — all those professional bodies to whom all members of society must, at one time or another, answer — even the Commissioners of Inland Revenue.

The young people concerned will gain a deeper knowledge of their own world, and the big world outside. The organisation will have come from the grass roots, from below, organised by the young people's own educated and intelligent minority.

A parallel can be made with the emergence of African nations. It is time for the Ministry of Education to liberate the Service of Youth. From the enlightened monarchy of the traditional youth club, from the post-Albemarle constitutional monarchy, the next stage must be independence. The lesson of the Congo will be repeated, and so will the lesson of Ghana. The elders will still be needed for the specialised and skilled tasks, and they will know and feel that they are needed, but the general operation must be in the hands of the young people.

### **The Result If We Don't?**

The distrust of the Them will continue; the Them who are out to take our money, to keep us off the streets, to make us good, to give us rock 'n' roll. The juke box, c/o Ministry of Education is no answer. It is merely pandering to popular taste. We might as well be nationalising the Mecca organisation with its slogans of courtesy and service; A Policy to Suit Everyone; Wonderful Lighting Effects. Please not a social service — a loan, not a subsidy. This younger generation must become socially responsive, but before that it must become socially responsible. It must learn self-government before it can expect (and society expect it) to understand and take part in a democratic society.

The Albemarle Report stated: "Young people should be given the opportunities for participation as partners in the youth service, and particularly in the development of self-programming groups. The Service FOR Youth must take a new look at itself. Progress between 1943 and 1960 has been backwards. Just who are the WE who intend to do all this for THEM? Shouldn't they be able to do it for themselves? The answer is YES, if we give them a chance. It is not only more money that is needed, it is an act of faith. We must be prepared to say: here is a grant, given to you, the young people, under the following conditions . . . organise yourselves, set up as a democratic institution a club that will cater for the leisure, recreation, and education of your own people.

### **And The Leaders In This Type Of Club?**

This is a difficulty, but I honestly believe that youth leaders would come forward under such a scheme. The club committee appoints the staff. The committee may be pressurised, but what committee isn't? The club committee may give way, and the wrong person can be appointed. But in general a leader will come through — an entire organisation would emerge with a staff of young people, highly skilled in dealing with their own problems.

### **And The National Training College For Youth Leaders Now Being Set Up?**

I feel that if this is for youth leaders, and not administrators and skilled advisors to a large, united, and youth-led youth service, it is one of the largest white elephants in which the Government has invested. The club boss should, at an age over 25, when he can no longer serve

in the position of leader, be able to enter such a college as this and train to join the staff at national or local headquarters, as an administrator, or a trained person with a particular skill to offer to all clubs in a particular region.

### **And Trust Bodies?**

There must be this last resort for a management committee, composed of youth, but only for those times of intense and apparently insoluble crises that are bound to occur. They should be a body of advisors, and not under any circumstances the executive or governing body. They might have to hold the property and assets, should the management committee of a club not be legally entitled to owing to age restriction. They should help when asked to, and intervene only in times of crisis.

### **And Voluntary Helpers?**

In the club I work in, there is a host of voluntary helpers — all unpaid, all under 25, all hard working. There are scores of young people waiting to help in building up and operating their own club, if they can feel that it is in fact their own club.

### **And What Is In This Club?**

Similar to a Students' Union building — a Working Men's Club — a drinking and eating room, a coffee bar, a dance hall, rooms for education, recreation, leisure, particular activities a club might wish to indulge in.

What I am advocating is that a Service of Youth should be set up, in the Genitive Case, under skilled guidance from the Ministry and local authorities. The operation in the field should be entirely in the hands of the young people, young people choosing their best members to work full time, and be fully paid in their own organisation.

It must cater first of all for leisure. It must be a service apart from work, home or school, situated in a building all to itself, on the beaten track used by young people in a particular locality — and not a youth wing attached to a school. If a young person wishes to be educated, there are organisations and institutions to cater professionally for his particular need.

What he must have, sooner or later, is a place of his own, operated by his own; and it should be the responsibility of the Labour Party to press for a policy which would make this possible. It is a policy that would be fraught with difficulties, but it is a policy that has operated successfully for other groups in society — the golf clubs, the co-op. societies, the women's luncheon clubs, the students' unions.

And, like the students, young people in this class have not the money for capital outlay necessary to put such a policy into operation. It has to be the responsibility of the Government to provide the capital outlay — in the form of a loan to the young people themselves who will have to ensure, and will ensure, that such a club pays for itself.

The leisure time of the working young person will not be satiated by youth workers providing activities for him; young people will not be satisfied with a service of youth until they can actually run the show, their own show; and like the golfers and all the rest they have a place of their own, controlled by their own. The Labour Party should feel proud to champion such a cause — a service run by the young people for the young people.

# 7. And this is Leicester

## Glossary

City — the area of the City of Leicester, and its suburbs; the entire population; the general public.

Town — the area of the city centre that includes the cinemas, pubs, cafes, shops, dance halls — the central area around which the life of the city revolves; and in particular those entertainment centres used by young people who regard the town as their local district although they may live in suburbs.

Membership — used broadly to include those who are regular users of the club; those who are known to the staff and committees.

During the free time I had while at Leicester University, I moved gradually away from the traditional student haunts — the Students' Union, the rather fey beery bars — back to the territory I had known and grown up in since I was a child, in Northampton, in London, and in provincial cities throughout Britain. I felt ill at ease (and still do) in the pubs on respectable inner suburban estates, or in the specialist pubs for the refined in the city centres. I preferred the large, mixed centre-city pub and coffee bar with their mixed clientele — Irish, local, East European, tarts, teds, market traders — the sort of pub in which one can spend an entire evening alone, and no one will disturb you or even speak, and yet with just a couple of cracks at the bar one is accepted by the society.

Alone, I sat or stood at different bars, hot dog stalls, coffee houses, and dance halls throughout the city for weeks, speaking to no one, except for the usual familiarities — until I felt I was beginning to come to terms with the climate, the atmosphere of the city and its people. At the time this was a semi-conscious action. I had no thought of work with young people, or of staying in Leicester whatsoever. The motive was interest, a liking for the types of person in the town equal to my dislike for the students as a body. It made a change. It was good for a nobble.

Slowly, from snippets of conversation overheard, and from moving from one dance hall to another, one pub to another, I had a reasonably accurate picture of the city — the tough estates, the posh and the respectable pubs, the gay bars, the bars for prostitutes, the teenagers' pubs, dance halls, etc. — those on the town, those for the honest working class, those for the respectable, those for the rich.

And after nearly six months of haphazard and intermittent getting around, I was using a pub on an inner suburb as a regular. It was large, darts and skittles, working class, no pretensions, nothing slutty or dirty, nothing off beat in its clientele; just ordinary men and women, all ages, most of them living on the estate nearby. But the young people in general kept themselves to one corner, and I found myself shifting towards the corner. I didn't say much — quiet, listening — but in time I was invited to come upstairs on Monday nights and hear the band practice. It was an open invitation and I took it.

It could probably be said that all this moving slowly into a solid social group was unnecessary and wasteful. If I had come out clean and said — look, I come from the next town south. I got stuck at this bloody university. I hate the guts of the place. You take me out, show me the town. Have a good time, right? I would have achieved easier and faster results. I'd have been one of the boys, a bit strange, but all right. But I had, and still have, no intention of becoming one

of the boys. I wasn't built like that. I wasn't brought up like that. I don't think like that; and what is more I don't want to be one of the boys.

The opposite method of contact would have been an honest one — I want to do good. I am educated. I want to help you. Gone about in the right way this might have worked, but again I couldn't, and didn't want to do good.

I went out on the town for a laugh, for interest, and to get away from my fellow students. I didn't want to do anything socially constructive, or make contact. Nor was it a question of being out for a good time with the lads. It was, and still is, a desire to keep my feet on the ground, a question of interest, of liking.

## Cash And Laughs

The band on a Monday night in the upstairs room was a strange combination. The singer was a little Cliff Richard from the posh end. To him I was, in some vague sort of way, the Man from Beyond. He wanted bookings, publicity, the breaks. He thought that I might help him to make these come his way. The band was traditional, brought up in the city working men's clubs and youth clubs, and the boozers in the country, and they were suspicious of outsiders. They were out for cash and laughs, and not for any higher worship, or hopes of fame. The fans of both, who were my first contacts, wanted both the band, the singer and the supporting acts to get on. It was they who, after I had been about with the band and the pub crowd for a few weeks, first suggested that they wanted to run a dance of their own; because playing for other people was often hack, they wouldn't get the breaks the way they were going on now, the dance might make money for me, and in any case it was all a nobble, a bit of a laugh. The idea cottoned on with nearly everyone in the group. I was asked to organise a dance; attend to the hiring of halls, and all the business they thought I could do better than they could. I could see their point, and I encouraged it to the stage of practical details.

It was at this time that I left the University, and I returned to London. But the ideas I was beginning to find, and the contacts I had made, brought me back to Leicester after a month as a working man. I took a flat, and a job of hard graft on the railway — hard work, fair pay with the overtime shifts. With the band and the singer I hired a hall for two consecutive Fridays. The first made a fantastic loss. The second just about broke even, but I was finished. The cash had gone, and there just was not any more. It took weeks of overtime to pay off the debts of the first dance. But the experiment had done one good thing. I was becoming known. In a small way I was on the map, and not as one of the boys, or one of Them — but as an 'all right', trying hard.

And now, added to the semi-professional band with its singer, there was another regular, a more amateur band composed from the town. More than one singer in the band was more interested in laughs than in money and prestige. The band was composed of the friends of the Big Power Leaders of the Town. It is from this band that some of the key positions in the present organisation have been filled. This second band inspired me, egged on further the idea.

The dances continued. They made a loss, but somehow it didn't matter now. I just forgot the bills. The idea was taking shape, and confidence in it was growing: a club run by the Town for the Town on the lines of a Students' Union. The press came in to the dances, sympathetic and helpful. Support was being found at the University for the idea, and I discovered that one's own thoughts had come up in other

people's minds. The climate for support was right. Leicester became the first site for Youth Venture sponsored clubs; and one of the first to apply for a capital grant from the Ministry of Education under the post-Albemarle conditions. A site was found, reasonably cheap in the centre of the city, for development into a permanent home for the club.

As the dances faded away they had ceased to be my responsibility. The idea, the dances and the future were being taken over by a committee, drawn largely from members of the second band. The supporters saw a potential in the idea, and in the people associated with it. I changed my job and worked on the production belt of a boom factory. And in March last year I was appointed full-time secretary to the organisation. In a period of four weeks a self-programming group holding weekly dances in a church hall had become a grass roots organisation committed by its supporters to over £12,000 in capital expenditure.

## The Upper House

From March to June little happened. I had the time necessary to discover the personalities and contacts to make the scheme concrete. There were administrative and legal matters to settle; planning approvals, Ministry forms to complete, the committee and supporters' organisations to formulate. The Trust Body saw itself as a supporters' body, and not a management committee. The young people themselves felt, and still do feel, a need for such a legally controlling 'Upper House', leaving them with a management committee composed only of their members which settles all practical matters of policy and practice. Yet even in the Supporting Body the members control 40 per cent of the votes. The Committee had to be fixed to make it more or less representative of the Town and the future users of the club.

During this period of full-time employment in setting the club into motion, much of my time was spent in finding the personalities who would keep the club 'on the Town', and in understanding the nature of the power groups who they would to some degree represent. Without this time I doubt if the 'Leicester Experiment' would exist in its present form. My tours of the pubs, dance halls, coffee bars and street corners were now made confidently.

## The Town

The Town fell broadly into three categories:

1. The Old Townies — tough, hard men who had been 'teddy boys' in the '50s. These were now aged 20-30.
2. The New Crowd who had become the present Townies. Seen by the general public as hard young men, rearing raughting all over, and led by one strong young man.
3. The Kids who, whatever the internal structure of the club, would support it.

I concentrated on the present Townies, aged 18-20; some of whom had been on the committees since their inauguration. But the leader, the King of the Townies, at least in the public image had so far been unaffected by the club idea. I was convinced that he had to be in this organisation, if we were to have the support of the town. He worked for a second-hand car business on an arterial road just outside the city. From being a mate, I had to know him, and discover why he had such a big reputation. I spent the best part of a week out at this garage, talking, watching, listening, asking, probing. I was convinced that he would be a good man for the committee, and so on he came. I am not at all sure how right I was, or if I was wrong; but I know now that I should have included one or

more of the other leaders, not so big or forceful, but with power, influence and the respect of the Town.

Meanwhile, our application for capital grant had resulted in the Ministry making an offer of 50 per cent. towards capital cost. Architect's drawing were being passed by the relevant authorities. But the new building would not be finished for another twelve months. Yet on the ground level an organisation was fully in existence, waiting to become concrete. Moves were then made to find temporary premises — central, in town, large. The first scheme fell through. My own position hit an all-time low. I was ordered by the committee to find another building, and be certain this time that it would not fall through. It was found, and after initial difficulties we were ready to move in.

The practical details were nearly complete — staffing, hours, operation. Having fought for the support of the Town for the basic idea, the supporters had differing views as to putting it into operation. They naturally wanted to see their own pet idea in practise. Pressures were exerted for jobs, for the take over, for the removal of myself, of Trustees, my own supporters on the committee, for sole control by the Old Townies, the present Townies, the Bands, the let's make money out of this, the ordinary kids who resented the over-powering effect the Town had. Bribes were offered. Bribes may at times have to be given, to silence sections, or to win others over. As is to be expected in such a society, the buying of a drink and the slap on the back is not enough for powerful men and women in this society.

To some extent this continues today. The quest for jobs, the take over bids, the wrecking, the using of rooms for a brothel, a male tattooist, a card school, for receiving stolen property, conversion into an all-night café, a businessmen's luncheon club — all these have had to be resisted, and there are doubtless many more pressures to resist in the future — and the ever-present idea in some people's minds that the organisation ought to fork out cash to meet every whim of the members, every debt, and every hard time. There have been committee meetings at which members have been afraid to speak up for fear of reprisals. There was the time when cash had to be dished out to stop the room we were using as an office being wrecked, the papers destroyed, and myself cut up.

There is always the simple solution — to call in the supporters of the idea as an idea, of the club as a club, who are the greater majority, but this I refrained from doing. The door of the club had to be open for all. And treating offenders in the same way as they had treated the club was no solution. I have met each challenge of this extreme kind on my own. I have since been proved right. When the supporters have moved in against individuals or individual power groups they have adopted the traditional methods of force, and in almost every case either they, or the club, has come off worse.

Before the club opened there was argument on all levels over staff. I refused to believe that the scheme would work if staff were appointed from other than the Town personalities. We were on the Town, with all its advantages and disadvantages; and the staff should all be experienced in the ways the Town worked, the personalities and principles involved. Another point I personally stuck out for was being open during the day and until quite late at night — noon to midnight.

## Centre Town Caff

And as the club was opened, control slid satisfactorily from myself to the staff team and the committee. I became,

what I am now — an administrative head, answerable to the committee, and carrying out their requests. The idea had become an organisation. There it was, the centre town caff; the coffee bar that soon became number one rendezvous for the Town, and the battlefield for all rival pressure groups, and gangs on the Town. The idea was working, and was beginning to pay its own way.

The full-time and fully-paid staff, the voluntary helpers and the committee were, and still are, Town personalities — the kid living off immoral earnings; the teenage prostitute; the professional thief; the hard man whose temper does not stop at hammering me; the promiscuous; the shoplifter; the boy from Borstal; the girl from the Approved School; the mentally retarded; the scarred; the one-eyed, the lazy and the unemployable; and the honest, tough, and plain ordinary.

These were not mere youth club members, but to some degree youth workers, the organisers and operators of a large organisation catering for a clientele that ranges from the most desirable virgin of 19 to the murderer of 25, who got away with manslaughter.

And is this the atmosphere in which the young, the ordinary boy and girl, are asked to participate? The answer to this is a firm No. The 'decent' boy and girl would not enter such a club. Its reputation is known all over the East Midlands. But for the large number of people who are Town conscious, be they honest, decent, or crooks and tarts; to them this club is a godsend. It is a real link between the traditional youth club which does not appeal to such a young person, and the on Town commercial pub or caff. There is riot, there is rape and there is theft: but

the remarkable feature is that it survives — and this is not due to any one person's influence. It exists and is progressing. There is a communal sense of responsibility for what they consider as their own club. They, and not I, make it work. They built it, painted it, repair it, and they keep its progress charts going up and up. The riots are not against the club, but 'family' ones between rival groups and gangs who both support the club. The 'rape' is mutual. The theft is petty, done by those too shy to ask for their pin money or cigarettes.

### Three Tier

And what is there at the club? A large building, but not large enough. A students' union on a smaller scale, for a much larger working population of the same age range. A three-tier arrangement — coffee bar with juke box; dance hall with a local self-programming rock band; quiet rooms and office with telly, billiards, magazines, newspapers, information and advice facilities.

My job is liaison — between the staff on the coffee bar, the committee who hold the controlling strings, the other outside and inside groups, from the L.E.A. to our own voluntary helpers, and our own trustee body. The immediate future is full of problems — legal, the new building, staff, finance, tensions on the town, the ordinary kids' relations with us — but it is working out. Someone can blunder, can slip up in his or her job, and the whole organisation might be in danger of collapse. But it works, and will continue to work, I believe, because it fulfills a deep social need for an unclubbed group of young people, and for this reason it will survive the ups and downs; and each upsurge should be greater than the last.