GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION
REPORT

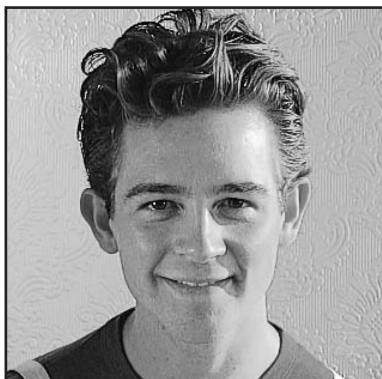
COLIN WARD

HAVENS AND SPRINGBOARDS

THE FOYER MOVEMENT IN CONTEXT

Colin Ward's many books tend to explore the relationship between people and their environment. He is the author of such key books as *The Child in the City* and *Tenants Take Over*, and he wrote the Gulbenkian Foundation's report *New Town, Home Town: the lessons of experience* (1993). He was awarded an honorary doctorate at Middlesex University in 1994 and was appointed as a visiting centennial professor at the London School of Economics in 1996. His most recent book is *Reflected in Water: A Crisis of Social Responsibility* (Cassell 1997).

HAVENS AND SPRINGBOARDS



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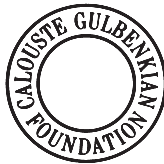

CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION, LONDON 1997

Published by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
98 Portland Place
London W1N 4ET
Tel: 0171 636 5313

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ISBN 0 903319 82 9

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Designed by Chris Hyde
Printed by Expression Printers Ltd, London N5 1JT
Distributed by Turnaround Publisher Services Ltd, Unit 3, Olympia Trading Estate, Coburg Road, Wood Green, London N22 6TZ. Tel: 0181 828 3000

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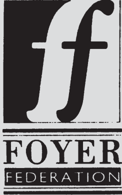
FOREWORD

The Foundation and I are particularly pleased to be publishing this book about Foyers, which may offer one of the best hopes for young people today who are unlucky enough to lack a home or a job. We are very grateful to Colin Ward for surveying and writing about this subject so eloquently.

Ben Whitaker
Director, UK Branch
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
June 1997



KEY

Operational Foyers ●
Foyers in development ■

Foyers in and around London

Camberwell	●	Covent Garden	●
Ealing	●	Kensington	●
Southwark	●	Romford	●
Wimbledon	●	Watford	●
City of London	■	Dartford	■
Greenwich	■	Hillingdon	■
Stratford	●		

■ Aberdeen
● Kirkcaldy
Cumbernauld ●
■ Edinburgh
■ Belfast
■ Lurgan
■ Tyneside
■ Sunderland
● Darlington
Richmond ●
● Ryedale
■ Scarborough
● Craven
Wigan, St Helens, Manchester, Salford, Halton, Wirral, Liverpool, Chester, Birchwood
■ Blackpool
■ Leeds
■ Bradford
■ Sheffield
● Market Rasen
■ Crewe
■ Wrexham
● Stoke
● Sleaford
● Nottingham
■ North Norfolk
● Wellington
● Stamford
● Norwich
■ Leicester
■ Birmingham
Northampton ●
● St Neots
■ Ipswich
■ Milton Keynes
■ Sudbury
Luton ●
■ Stevenage
■ Colchester
● Braintree
● Stroud
Berkhamsted ●
■ Central Herts
■ Swansea
■ Newport
● High Wycombe
● Southend
■ Cardiff
■ Swindon
■ Slough
■ Bristol
LONDON
Medway
Weston ●
● Bath
● Newbury
● Reading
● Swale
Basingstoke ●
■ Maidstone
Bridgewater ●
● Guildford
● West Kent
● Yeovil
Portsmouth ●
Bridport ●
■ Dorset
■ Brighton
■ Isle of Wight
■ Plymouth

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A Foyer is defined as 'an integrated approach to meeting the needs of young people during their transition from dependence to independence by linking affordable accommodation to training and employment'. The Foyer movement in Britain was inspired by the experience of France and has adopted the French term *foyer* rather than the English word *hostel* for specific reasons. The first was in order to avoid the negative connotations that the English word may have acquired, of regimentation or institutionalisation. The second was to stress the link with training and employment. A third was the shrewd calculation that in the climate of the 1990s a new concept might attract new money for investment in the needs of young people of 16 to 25, whose plight in attempting to enter adult society has steadily worsened for decades.

My attempt to examine the Foyer movement in its social context has been made possible by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and I am very much indebted to many busy people who have willingly talked to me and shown me around. I am also grateful to a series of young people for answering yet more questions from yet another inquisitor.

Special thanks are due: in France to Charles-Antoine Arnaud, Isabelle Berruyer, Ronald Creagh, Bernard Faure and Pierre Fauth; in Germany to Mustafa Bayram, Birgit Niclas, Heiner Sandrock, and Antje and Harald von Zimmermann; and in Britain to Sarah Brennan, John Drake, Julian Heddy, Paul Hulley, Sheila McKechnie and Don Macdonald. The last of these, in his four years as chief executive of the Foyer Federation for Youth, has helped to steer the movement into existence through continual explanation, diplomacy, cajolery and lobbying of the powerful, but has always found time for little local groups of enthusiasts and for outside enquirers like me.

Needless to say, none of these people are responsible for any conclusions I have drawn or opinions I have expressed, but all are gratefully thanked.

Colin Ward

The Elusive Golden Age

1

1. THE ELUSIVE GOLDEN AGE

Every aspect of life has its golden age and the one common factor of all these golden ages is that they are never the present. This truth is nowhere more evident than in our attempts to apply it to the concept of youth. Some people are convinced that simply 'to be young was very heaven', having forgotten the needless anxieties, embarrassments and sheer clumsiness in personal relations they experienced at the time.

Others remind us that our ancestors leapt from childhood to adulthood at puberty, and that as Frank Musgrove explained many years ago:

> 'The adolescent as a distinct species is the creation of modern social attitudes and institutions. A creature neither child or adult, he is a comparatively recent socio-psychological invention, scarcely two centuries old. Distinctive social institutions have been fashioned to accommodate him; psychologically he has been made more or less to fit them, moulded by appropriate rewards and penalties.'[1]

These rewards and penalties were noticeably different between the sexes and between the classes. In the pre-war golden age, girls were tied to the parental household until marriage unless they had a job, while for boys, work brought an instant change of status. Thus the oral historians Steve Humphries and Pamela Gordon report:

> 'If there was one defining moment when our interviewees felt they grew up and began to be treated like adults, it was when they started a full-time job. For most working-class boys between the wars this coincided with their fourteenth birthday: they left school on the Friday and began work on the following Monday. The weekly pay packet, usually handed over unopened to Mum, gave the young worker a new status and importance in the family. In exchange for the money – which could significantly raise the standard of living in working-class homes – the boy was given new privileges. Many recall being bought their first pair of long trousers and enjoying more food on their plate, relief from domestic chores and permission to stay out later at night. They were also given pocket money which could be spent on displays of masculinity.'[2]

This golden age of effortless transition from childhood to adulthood in the 1930s was the experience of some. For boys who failed to find a job there

were government work camps known to the inmates as 'slave camps' and the same investigators record the experience of the most unpopular of pre-war attempts to contain unemployment.

> 'The first opened in Presteigne in Mid-Wales in 1929 and 10 years later there were 35 of them designed (in the official jargon of the time) to "recondition" around 25,000 young inmates each year. In all, around 150,000 young men on the dole – most of them aged between 18 and 25 – passed through these harsh and punitive institutions in the 1930s.[3]

And they note that girls were not neglected, explaining that by 1930 there were more than 40 'home-training centres' for young unemployed women, training them for domestic service and helping to solve the 'servant problem'. They learned that 'in some of the centres make-up was banned and trainees were chaperoned whenever they left the premises', and that they were trained in cookery, table service, laundry work, cleaning, needlework and hygiene only to find when they got a job that 'the hours were long, the pay was pitiful, the status was low and the little free time enjoyed by live-in servants was often closely policed by employers.' Girls who became pregnant were locked away in Mother and Baby Homes. Some actually found themselves in mental hospitals with their babies taken away for adoption.

At a different social level the prolongation of education kept young people in a situation of dependency. A well-known autobiographical passage from a pre-war book by George Orwell explains that 'a middle-class person goes utterly to pieces under the influence of poverty; and this is generally due to the behaviour of his family – to the fact that he has scores of relations nagging and badgering him night and day for failing to "get on"'. He goes on to compare what was evidently his situation when young with that of others with what he saw as healthier instincts:

> 'The time was when I used to lament over quite imaginary pictures of lads of 14 dragged protesting from their lessons and set to work at dismal jobs. It seemed to me dreadful that the doom of a "job" should descend upon anyone at 14. Of course I know now that there is not one working-class boy in a thousand who does not pine for the day when he will leave school ... To the working-class, the notion of staying at school till you are

> nearly grown-up seems merely contemptible and unmanly. The idea of a great big boy of 18, who ought to be bringing a pound a week home to his parents, going to school in a ridiculous uniform and even being caned for not doing his lessons! Just fancy a working-class boy of 18 allowing himself to be caned! He is a man when the other is still a baby.'[4]

If the 1930s were not the golden years of youth, there is a strong and paradoxical case to be made for the wartime years of the 1940s, provided of course that you lived in Britain and survived the war. Thanks to the cheap miniature cassette recorder, the busiest oral historians are primary school children interviewing grandparents and elderly neighbours for a class project on the past, and the stories they bring back are seldom about extreme situations of sudden death and danger, or the horrors of incarceration and deprivation, nor even of the tedium of food rationing. They hear of the disappearance of the dole queue, of work for everyone and of a sense of comradeship in adversity.

The evidence they bring back to school is that the overriding demands of military or industrial conscription enabled young women as well as young men to make a break with the family home without rancour and recrimination. For the young the wartime years provided a declaration of independence as 20 year-olds found themselves entrusted with lethal machinery worth millions, and with responsibility for the lives of others. Once again, Orwell, as an acute observer of the texture of life, grasped this in a novel published in 1939. His narrator meets a young man at a meeting:

> 'And then all of a sudden I seemed to see him. It was as if I hadn't properly seen him till that moment.
>
> 'A very young eager face, might have belonged to a good-looking schoolboy, with blue eyes and tow-coloured hair, gazing into mine, and for a moment actually he'd got tears in his eyes! Felt as strongly as all that about the German Jews! But as a matter of fact I knew just what he felt. He's a hefty lad, probably plays rugger for the bank. Got brains, too. And here he is, a bank clerk in a godless suburb, sitting behind the frosted window, entering figures in a ledger, counting piles of notes, bumsucking to the manager. Feels his life rotting away. And all the while, over in Europe, the big stuff's happening ... '[5]

This insight is a useful reminder that there is a relationship between the personal fulfilments we get from daily life and our engagement in wider social issues, whether these are socially approved, like a concern for political, global or environmental engagement, or disapproved, like football hooliganism, joy-riding or territorial gang warfare. And it explains why those who were young at the time locate their golden age as the time when they experienced, in Randolph Bourne's unforgettable phrase, 'that *peacefulness* of being at war'.[6]

There are more comfortable grounds for seeing the late 1950s and the 1960s as the golden age of youth in the sense of providing a relatively painless transition between childhood and adult life. For the vast majority of young people the full employment of the war years had continued into the peace. The minimum age for leaving school had been raised to 15 after the war and was to rise again to 16 in the year 1972-3. Schools had changed, but were still seen as prisons by a proportion of pupils, who waited impatiently for the day they were set free to go to work. Parents and teachers, remembering the insecurity of jobs when they were young, would urge against the acceptance of dead-end jobs and urge their children to seek apprenticeships, despite the low initial wage. There had always been conscientious firms with training programmes linked with the local technical or further education college, and their complaint was that once workers had completed an apprenticeship, another firm with no training programme would lure them away with higher wages.

The Industrial Training Act of 1964 sought to remedy this by imposing a levy on all employers in an industry, which was shared out among firms actually providing training, linked with day-release or block-release to college. When Peter Willmott conducted his survey of the experience of adolescent boys in East London he found that nine-tenths of young workers found the atmosphere of the college much better than school, and when asked why, gave replies which every teacher in that sector of education will recognise as familiar:

> 'It's much freer and happier there and the relationship with the teacher is better. They treat you like grown-up people and they impose discipline from respect. They can make it more interesting by telling you why

> you're learning a subject you think is going to help you.' 'It's completely different from school. You call the teachers by their first names, and there's no "Yes, sir, No, Sir". They treat you like men. They treat you with more respect, so you act right yourself. I've learnt more in three months at evening classes than I learned in three years at school.'[7]

Those were the days of work for all the young, and for those not locked into an apprenticeship, the most common complaint was their flexibility and adaptability in flitting from job to job. Mark Abrams reported: 'since the 1930s the real earnings of teenagers have risen much faster than those of adults.'[8] Their unprecedented spending power gave rise to a specific teenage culture and a series of fashions in clothing and dress accessories, music and entertainment. The elders shook their heads in disbelief, especially when fashion was succeeded by anti-fashion in the form of the punk eruption. But ageing Mods and Rockers remember the years of full employment as *the* golden age of youth.

Full employment ensured easier entry into the labour market for the young of ethnic minorities and an increasing recognition of equal opportunities for women. Further education teachers learned from the composition of classes which industries and which employers operated unspoken policies of exclusion and over the years could see these barriers coming down. The long-established and universally recognised City and Guilds crafts certificates and the Ordinary National and Higher National Certificates for technicians covered every occupation and the colleges were able to facilitate changes of direction for young people who had made the wrong choice on leaving school. And the new importance of the young as spenders and consumers brought greater independence and more tolerance of sexual behaviour and sexual experiment. The age of majority was reduced, with little opposition, from 21 to 18.

Young people were happier, more independent and more mobile, and their elders would continually remind them 'You don't know how lucky you are'.

Golden age mythologies have two disadvantages. One is that it is easy to forget that some people are simply bypassed by the golden age which fails to touch their lives. The other is that plenty of people fail to notice that the golden age is over. In 1963 the Central Advisory Council for Education

produced its report *Half our Future*, examining the problems faced by children of what was seen as average and below-average ability in secondary schools.[9] Called the Newsom Report, after its chairman, it divided these children into John Brown, John Jones and, in the least able quarter of any age range, John Robinson. (I should mention that, writing over 30 years ago, he was using male names and pronouns to subsume both sexes, as was still customary then.) One of the committee members, Alec Clegg, Chief Education Officer for West Yorkshire, was invited to give a lecture celebrating the centenary of the Education Act of 1870. He chose to discuss 'The Education of John Robinson':

> 'He's the son of an unskilled worker with a large family, living in a poor area. He starts at his secondary school below average in height, weight and measurable intelligence and he's placed in a low stream in the school. He it is who would profit most by a generous use of the school's practical rooms but he is in fact allowed less use of them than either John Brown or John Jones. Though teaching him is one of the hardest jobs, he's often taught by the poorest teachers, and when a teacher is absent it's he who has to make shift. This isn't my invention: all these facts come from a national survey conducted for us when we were on the Newsom Committee. The school isn't concerned about him as it is about those who will bring it the renown of examination successes. He dislikes wearing uniform and is seldom a member of the school society or team. He has free dinners, and although Newsom didn't point this out, he often has to queue for his ticket after those who pay have received theirs. He who most needs the spur of success rarely experiences it. He lacks that most powerful of all educational forces, the parental aspiration which does so much for the middle-class child, and he lacks what HMIs described over 100 years ago as "that recognition which our natures crave and acknowledge with renewed endeavour".'

At this point Alec Clegg had us all nodding with agreement. Yes, we all knew John Robinson. So he added his most devastating comment:

> 'Now may I continue where Newsom left off? He leaves school as soon as he can but is often among the last to land a job, and when he does land one, it doesn't carry the distinction of day release or an apprenticeship;

> and as he's virtually discarded by his school, he avoids the youth club and further education, both of which remind him of it. He knows the misery of unimportance: and as no teacher has ever been a John Robinson, no teacher knows the depth of his resentment.'[10]

In 1963, the year of the Newsom report, at the height of the golden age of youth, I was editing a magazine and was sent an article by an 18 year-old from Newcastle, unemployed for two out of the three years since he left school. His experience was remarkably like that of many others over 30 years later. 'Employers have a choice of a dozen lads, and therefore offer a very low price – knowing someone will take it. They know that pressure from parents – who want their kids working no matter what – gives them the opportunity to fix wages to their own liking.' He described the form taken by most of his job interviews:

Q: How many jobs have you had?
A: Two. One at Finneys' Seeds and one at Woolworths.
Q: Why did you leave?
A: I didn't. I got fired.
Q: From both?
A: Yes.
Q: How long have you been unemployed?
A: Two years this Christmas.
Q: Which school and what standard achieved?
A: Firefield Sec. Mod. and I didn't take any exams because I was in the D Form all the way through.

He described the few jobs, with heavy work, long hours and the lowest wages which were always on offer for people like him and from which they were usually fired after the first week if they had not already given notice themselves. 'Once again they are at home during the day, being nagged at by their mothers for giving up the job, and for living off her. So the chances that they will take another dead-end racket job, when it comes along, are increased.' And when they were interviewed at what was then the National Assistance Board, the suggestion was that they should 'move on to another district in search of work ... move on to another parish ... That suggestion is mad. Tyneside is not the only black spot.'[11]

That particular John Robinson later won a considerable reputation as a poet, an option not open to many of his equivalents. But by the 1990s his ranks have been joined by John Brown and John Jones and by endless other Johns and Janes by no means confined to Newsom's 'average and below-average ability', nor to places regarded as centres of high unemployment.

Yet another aspect of the receding golden age was that of the housing of the mobile young who were leaving home to take up jobs. The famous names in industry operating apprenticeship schemes ran hostels for their young trainees, as did the big metropolitan department stores. Julian Heddy explains that there was once a culture of provision for internal mobility among young workers:

> 'Young workers' mobility in the private sector was supported by an infrastructure of company hostels. Barclays Bank had around 600 bed-spaces in London, as did the National Westminster Bank. The Civil Service had a network of hostels which were privatised, which also included nationalised industries who had their own apprenticeship hostels ... It would appear that during full employment, labour mobility was only sustained by this network of hostels.'[12]

But it was also sustained by a network of landladies, who welcomed young workers to their spare bedrooms and provided both meals and laundry services. They are part of the folklore of the golden age, often remembered for their hospitality, and they belonged to a different culture from that of many modern professional landlords, notorious for extracting an income from Housing Benefit paid for sordid, and sometimes, unsafe, accommodation.

The golden age of youth was a comfortable myth, but at the end of the century, as parents remember in retrospect how simple it used to be for *their* generation to find work, an income, and a place to stay, the young, whose own situation is so bleak, are entitled to observe: 'You don't know how lucky you *were*'.

The Marginalisation of Youth

2

2. THE MARGINALISATION OF YOUTH

It was as long ago as 1971, recognising that with the decline of traditional heavy industries the situation of young school leavers was steadily worsening, that the National Association of Youth Clubs convened a working party on youth unemployment, chaired by John Ewen of the National Youth Bureau, and linking many interested bodies. Its report urged the creation of a new Community Industry, not as 'made work' but as a permanent feature of the employment market with a career structure of its own. The report stressed:

> 'This is *not* to suggest the creation of "non-jobs", but to recognise the enormity of community tasks, particularly in the environmental field. The answer we offer and believe to be appropriate is a real answer. It is *not* based on short-term planning in terms of social education programmes as an alternative to work, but a true answer in that it would provide these young people with genuine and valuable work, which could, if mounted with an appropriate educational programme, provide high status opportunities never previously offered. It is not the offer of a charitable hand-out, but the opportunity of a valuable role in society, and this is the only reasonable answer for society to provide.
>
> 'We do not believe the scheme should be exclusively within the environmental improvement field, but should include an increase in the ancillary help available in the social services, both statutory and voluntary, in housing renovation schemes, in hospitals and other parts of the health service, and in a variety of other outlets. We are anxious to underline that this proposal should be in no way confused with schemes of voluntary community service, or with the sometimes mooted compulsory community service schemes. We are advocating the recognition of a new industry of community work, which like any other industry would pay appropriate rates and in which would emerge a career structure.
>
> 'We believe it is important that the growth of such a new industry should be accompanied by relevant new structures of management, and that these structures should enable the maximum participation of young workers. Indeed, it could well be that in some experiments, young people could be allocated schemes to control for themselves, employing external skilled people at their own decision; and that enabling agents (*animateurs*) should be available to such schemes to facilitate self-direction. For we believe it

> important that the status of the less academically able needs to be enhanced, both in their own self-esteem and in the esteem of others.
>
> 'For the alternative is an ever-increasing estrangement of this group from the rest of society. Those lacking in academic abilities are not always lacking in other aptitudes (for example innate leadership qualities and peer group loyalties) and these need to be given constructive and positive outlets in society, mainly because our traditional beliefs in the value of human dignity require such opportunities to be offered, but also because if such opportunities are not offered, these qualities are likely to be channelled into negative attitudes and actions which are already, and will increasingly, cost society dear.'[1]

I quote at length from this forgotten document of a quarter of a century ago in order to stress that there were people around who foresaw the growing crisis of youth unemployment and sought a permanent improvement in their situation through socially valuable work. John Ewen's report was not totally ignored. The government made money available for a one-year trial operation directed by the NAYC with staff seconded from the Department of Employment. However, key features of the proposal, like the concept of a recognised occupation and a career structure, were quietly dropped. It was seen as an emergency measure. The same was true of its successor, the Job Creation Programme (JCP) introduced by the Labour Government in the mid-1970s.

Meanwhile the terms Community Enterprise or Community Business had been adopted to describe a variety of local attempts to develop useful work locally. John Pearce, in his report on its successes and failures, defines it as:

> 'a sustainable commercial enterprise which is owned and controlled by the local community. It aims to create jobs and related training opportunities and to encourage local economic activity. Profits are used to create more jobs and businesses and to generate wealth for the benefit of the community.'[2]

However, as Pearce puts it, the term was 'hijacked' in 1980, when Jim Prior, Secretary of State for Employment in the first Thatcher Government, adopted the name Community Enterprise Programme (CEP) for what began as JCP but had become STEP (Special Temporary Employment Programme). The continually changing acronyms, and the rise and rise and eventual disappearance of the Manpower Services Commission, the body

appointed to administer these short-term approaches to the ever-worsening crisis of joblessness, was confusing to the staff and incomprehensible to the young unemployed.

The Community Enterprise Programme became simply the Community Programme which many people see as the most useful phase in this litany of token governmental busy-ness. A great many usually impoverished bodies were able to become employers and I have known young people who were enabled to discover a *métier* which became their livelihood because of it, in some of the fields which had been the concern of the Community Industry proposals, from tree-planting to housing management and maintenance. But in 1988 the Government abruptly announced that with the introduction of its Employment Training (ET) programme, Community Programme funding would end. Projects were offered the opportunity to convert to ET, but about 45% of them were unable or unwilling to do so, or could not find a way of conforming with the ET rules. Meanwhile the name and responsibilities of the MSC were changed to those of the Training Commission, concerned exclusively with technical and vocational education.

For by the early 1980s government policy had ensured that the situation of a minority of young people in earlier decades had become the normal experience of working-class school leavers, especially young men. A Cabinet minister of the period, Lord Gilmour, recalled ruefully that his colleagues had succeeded in 'maximising the country's casualties' and that in consequence:

> 'by the second quarter of 1981 they had doubled the unemployment they inherited. Poverty and misery had similarly increased. Between the election in 1979 and the first half of 1981 output fell by 5%, and manufacturing production fell by 17%. The decline in industrial output was "the fastest in recorded history". Most serious of all, between a quarter and a fifth of manufacturing industry was wiped out.'[3]

From the standpoint of the young, it could be added that the institution of apprenticeship as a smooth transition from school to work, and from childhood to adulthood, was fatally weakened. It had adapted to the raising of the minimum school-leaving age from 15 to 16 in 1972-3, and had been enhanced by the Industrial Training Act, spreading responsibility for training to a wider spread of industries. In the climate of a 'leaner and fitter' economy, fewer and fewer firms dared take on apprentices or trainees. As they collapsed,

the difficulties for their managers were heightened by the task of finding another firm, lucky enough to survive, to take over the responsibility.

Government saw the training levy as just another constraint preventing British industry from competing successfully in world markets, and promptly abolished the Industrial Training Boards. Every member of the Cabinet was told to read a new and fascinating book from 1981, Martin Wiener's *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980*,[4] which was continually quoted, but without regard for the fact that it was concerned exclusively with the education of a ruling elite; not at all with that of ordinary families whose advice to their children had always been that they should learn a trade or skill and stay clear of those forms of employment which offered anything less. This was also the approach to work urged by careers teachers in school and in the Youth Employment Service. A very significant shift in attitude can be seen by the 1990s. Children who have a weekend job, in the catering trade or stacking the shelves in a supermarket, while still at school, value the experience not only for the money or for the dignity that goes with being at work, but because, being individually known to the employer, they may find full-time work in the same occupation on leaving school.[5]

The same thing is true of the 'work experience' placements provided by most secondary schools. Any job, whether part-time or poorly paid, or both, was valued by the young as a source of purchasing power and by government as a means of massaging the statistics of youth unemployment. As Will Hutton puts it:

> 'There is a mutual and self-destructive compact between the unskilled worker and the firm, in which it makes sense neither for the individual to invest time in training nor for the firm to offer it. As with so much else in the British system, the blind lead the blind. A teenager has to be very long-sighted indeed to want to undertake training that will raise his or her lifetime earnings only after the age of 35 and which, although it might help reduce the likelihood of unemployment, is for any individual an impossible risk to assess. At the same time firms are under pressure to maximise short-term profits, and incurring immediate costs for uncertain future benefits is equally irrational. In any case there is no certainty that the trained workers will stay with the firm that shoulders the costs. The rational approach, in terms of the system, is to minimise training and poach the skilled when market conditions demand it.'[6]

This was, of course, the situation which earlier legislation had sought to avoid by sharing the cost of training between those enterprises that provided it and those that did not. In the 1980s and 1990s government promoted a whole new language of work training, centred around a battery of new institutions. One of these is the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) set up as a company by the Government in 1986. This is concerned with 'reforming the existing vocational qualification system and introducing simplified arrangements. Qualifications meeting the NCVQ criteria in terms of skill, knowledge, understanding and the ability to perform in-work activities are known as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and carry the NCVQ insignia.'[7]

Another is the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) formed in 1983 by the amalgamation of existing bodies, and itself merged in 1996 with the University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC) The two organisations announced that 'an appropriate new name is being sought for the new body', but that meanwhile, it:

> 'will have an income of £50m and 500 staff, making it one of the largest examining and awarding authorities in the country. We believe that, with time, this greater critical mass will allow us to provide our services more cost-effectively and to enhance key areas of activity, such as research and development. It will help us promote a wider range of qualifications and services for the individual and to support the national drive for a better qualified, more competitive workforce.'[8]

These bodies, like the venerable City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) award National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at four levels, and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), aimed at people aged 16 to 19 at advanced, intermediate and foundation levels.

The key figures in the new landscape are the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), or in Scotland Local Enterprise Councils (LECs). These were established by central government, and dependent on its funding for almost all their income, with the remit that:

> 'A TEC will be an independent company with a commercial contract with the Secretary of State for Employment to develop training and expertise in its area. A TEC will normally take the form of a company

> limited by guarantee and will be run by a board of directors led by private sector business leaders. It will have a wide remit, a large budget and sufficient executive authority to improve measurably the local skill base and to spur business growth.'[9]

As though in homage to the old apprenticeship system, one of the tasks of the TECs has been the promotion of Modern Apprenticeships lasting three years, for young people aged 16 to 17, announced by the Secretary of State for Employment in March 1994, and Accelerated Modern Apprenticeships, for 18 to 19 year-olds, announced in the Government's White Paper on Competitiveness in May 1994. But two years later, in June 1996, it was reported that while the Secretary of State for Education and Employment had announced the doubling of modern apprenticeships to 60,000 in 1996, only 23,500 had entered the scheme, and that Accelerated Modern Apprenticeships were being abandoned 'after only 400 youngsters signed up for a programme designed for 9,000'. The report went on to explain:

> 'According to figures from the Department for Education and Employment, 7.1% of all modern apprentices were taking hairdressing, compared to 0.1% in telecommunications ... At the end of February there were twice as many apprentices in childcare (2.4%) as in chemicals (1.2%), and three times as many being trained in retailing (4.3%) as in information technology (1.4%). While 26.5% were on manufacturing courses, only 6.2% were taking electrical engineering training, and 1.6% were on engineering construction courses ... Even more startling however, are the geographical distortions in the scheme. Kent has the dubious distinction of recording 62.8% of its trainees in hairdressing, while across the estuary in Essex there are none.
>
> 'Nearly half Tyneside's apprentices (46.5%) are being trained in retailing, compared with 6.9% in nearby Teesside. But while a similar proportion of Teesside youngsters are being trained in childcare (6.4%), there are no apprentice child-minders in Tyneside – compared with 29.7% of trainees in Birmingham and 21.6% in Hertfordshire.'[10]

The TECs are criticised on the one hand for training in 'redundant' production skills, and on the other for their attention to consumer skills. Personally I am sure that training in childcare is a valuable asset for anyone, but it is far from the popular perception of an apprenticeship.

However, a less grandly-named aspect of the work of TECs and LECs is that of Youth Training (YT) which in May 1990 replaced the earlier Youth Training Scheme (YTS) as the basis of government policy towards young people aged 16 and 17 who were not in full-time education or employment. It was to provide them with training leading to NVQs at Level II or above. The Government promised training for all, and to enforce adherence to this programme, in September 1988 withdrew the payment of Income Support to people within this age-range by the Department of Social Security, with certain exceptions for cases of 'severe hardship'.

This policy has not been successful, but has caused much misery. I do not need to labour the point because much of the evidence gathered by the report from Youthaid and The Children's Society *A Broken Promise: The Failure of Youth Training Policy*[11] was drawn from the evidence given by TECs and LECs to the House of Commons Select Committee on Employment in 1991. The staff of the Training and Enterprise Councils are frustrated by their inability to fulfil the demands made on them by government promises.

Meanwhile nobody, except the professionals involved, understands the continually changing language of vocational education and training. Least of all is it comprehended by young people and their parents. The older generation understands old certainties and is not impressed by new certificates. The young ask the vital question, 'Will it get me a job?' As for potential employers, I was assured by the training director of several TECs and the managers of several Foyers that employers were bemused by the new qualifications and would readily train the right person on the job.

They paid far more attention to the self-presentation, openness and confidence of any boy or girl. These, of course, are the characteristics we all enjoy among the young, but the brutal fact is that there are not enough employers to go round. Current ideology in any field advocates 'downsizing' which is a euphemism for getting the same amount of work out of fewer people. If any branch of work can be contracted out to a supplier not bound by the normal rules of employment and the legal obligations of employer to employee, it is bought in from other agencies. It bewilders not only young school leavers, but their parents and advisers.

Experience had already taught many young people that there was no place

for them in the new post-industrial society. Dr Clive Wilkinson was commissioned by the Employment Service to examine the lives of a sample of 250 young people living on peripheral housing estates in Sunderland.[12] He found that only 36% of them had been on a training programme. Two-thirds were neither in work nor in training or education.

> 'They see training schemes as a device to fill in time until they return to the dole with no possibility of a real job at the end of the training period. This, compounded by problems of lack of choice, bullying, inadequate or non-existent training, employer abuse of the system, and a pervasive sense of pointlessness, provides little in the way of positive motivation to undertake training.'

He found that in effect, many leave school at 12 or 13 and 'vote with their feet' since as one head teacher told him, they are 'doomed to failure' from the start. 'Against a background of domestic turmoil, insecurity, unemployment and poverty, many young people find that they are simply unable to cope with the demands of an education system that seems heavily weighed against them,' and these attitudes are carried over into the post-school world. He believes that there may be as many as 100,000 young people throughout the country who are not on the official registers and in fact are not part of the official society at all. Reporting on his study, Clive Wilkinson had a telling conclusion:

> 'One of the more interesting and revealing aspects is that when asked what they wanted for the future, these young people, almost without exception, stated that they wanted a job, a steady income, a home and a family, and a car. They want the ordinary things that you and I want. They are not out to wreck society. They want to be a part of it. They want to have a place in it, a place of dignity, respect and reward.'[13]

The Foyer movement is an attempt to help some young people, threatened by the crisis of both housing and employment, to find their place in society. Before describing its emergence in Britain, I must explore the background to its evolution in Germany and in France.

The German Experience

3

3. THE GERMAN EXPERIENCE

You have only to see a performance of Wagner's *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, with its procession of apprentices in the guilds of tailors, bakers, cobblers and instrument-makers in the sixteenth century, to realise how deeply rooted in German history is the concept of craft apprenticeship and its modern equivalent, known as the 'dual system' of vocational education and training, which for many years has been admired and envied in Britain. The German system is 'employer-led' and promotes what is seen as a 'high-skills equilibrium' as opposed to the 'low-skills equilibrium' of British technical education.

British observers of the German system insist that the key question from Anglo-German comparisons is not how to emulate the German approach, but rather 'How can we also produce a training culture?' They are aware of the defects and weaknesses of the German approach, but insist that 'these are largely overcome because they have a training culture: that is, there is a widespread consensus about, and commitment to, the value of education and training'.[2] One notable feature of the training culture developed in Germany was its acknowledgment of the particular needs of young people living away from the parental home:

> 'The German apprenticeship schemes incorporate lodging or accommodation, and trainees receive not only free board and lodging but also a small amount of pocket money. The overall costs are paid by the Ministry of Labour.'[3]

Having seen in Germany the (by British standards) lavish equipment and furnishing of hostels and training centres, I was astonished when my host remarked 'In these fields, Germany is about 10 years behind Britain'. When I protested that he couldn't know of the endless struggle for funding and continual improvisations of British equivalents, he replied that this was precisely what he meant. Economic decline would bring the same pressures to reduce social spending, The German system, in its modern form, had evolved in the years of the Economic Miracle and of automatic full employment. The collapse of the East German regime, and of the Soviet Union, as well as the intensity of competition in world markets, had put huge strains on the firm-based, employer-led system of technical education. As in Britain, the contraction of manufacturing industry meant that the

supply of apprenticeships could not meet the demand for them. Hence, he stressed, the dangerous manifestations of hostility towards 'immigrants' including the children of 'guest-workers' welcomed into the German economy many decades ago, because their labour was needed.

The German Youth Institute (*Deutsches Jugendinstitut*) is concerned with the rapid growth of homelessness among the young and relates it to factors familiar in other European countries, including the loss of unskilled jobs through the rationalisation of production, and also to the contraction of the training culture:

> 'Unemployment and a shortage of training and apprenticeships have hit young people in the former East Germany particularly hard; but in the former West Germany too, the move into the world of work in problem regions is difficult, especially for girls. Altogether, 15% of young people do not have the requisite qualifications on leaving school.'[4]

Several of the networks of organisations catering for homeless young people have seen their task as more than that of providing a night shelter for a limited stay, and aspire to steering the homeless young into work. In Frankfurt, the Association for Vocational Training and Social Education finds that on any one night the city has around 300 homeless young people. It provides a home for a total of six days and nights a month, and hopes to give advice too:

> 'All come of their own free will and no one is forced to take part in a counselling session. If the young people only want to eat and sleep, that is acceptable. The only requirement is that they identify themselves; because the provisions of the Children's and Youth Services Act require that the social workers inform parents of their children's whereabouts. If the young people wish to remain anonymous, they are only allowed three overnight stays per month. The project's clients are primarily those who want nothing more to do with public authorities, youth services or (often) their families. They often have a "career" in children's homes or foster homes behind them, or have run away from desolate, non-functional families, and live on the street and amongst the drug scene.'[5]

My German informants all argue that the existence of these 'railway station kids' or 'street kids' indicate a failure to reach these young people on their way down, before they slip out of society and consequently feel themselves to

be at war with it. Mustafa Bayram is a member of a private organisation, working as a co-operative called ISBB, where his task is that of a diagnostician, discovering why this particular boy or girl is failing. Is it a matter of an intolerable situation in the family home, of job-training, job-finding, dropping out of an apprenticeship, or the need for remedial care in language or basic education? His organisation then finds the right niche in provision for these individual difficulties and claims a high success rate. He is trusted because he is outside the official system, but has links and shared expertise with a variety of networks of support.

Germany has a long tradition of hostels for apprentices, called *Lehrlingsheime* or *Kolpinghäuser*, after Arnold Kolping, one of their pioneers, and usually run by Catholic or Protestant organisations (in some ways the equivalent of the YMCA and YWCA in the English-speaking world) to meet the housing needs of young people from rural areas, serving an apprenticeship in towns and cities. After both the world wars, newly improvised havens were started to help those who had neither a secure parental home, nor a niche in the established system of vocational education.

The Nikolaus-Gross-Haus in Cologne, for example, is named after a Catholic leader of a mineworkers' trade union, murdered by the Nazis, and is directed by Wimar Breuer, a well-known defender of the claims of the young. It provides, in a beautifully rehabilitated former barracks building, 76 bedrooms in high-quality accommodation, together with training workshops, but it also finds room for a hairdressing salon and a body-building studio.

The particular group of disadvantaged young people it is catering for at the moment is that of the children of 'ethnic Germans' settled for centuries in southern Russia. Their families were deported in 1941 to the Soviet Far East, and after the collapse of the USSR, were given the right to 'return' to Germany. Needless to say, these people were as disadvantaged as any other immigrants in modern German society, and one of the tasks of the Nikolaus-Gross-Haus is providing a home base for their teenage children involved in the secondary school system, including tuition in skills they may be missing in language, as well as induction into the world of work. The institution is part of a large-scale nation-wide pattern of hostels with equivalent specialised clienteles, or providing for the general housing and training needs of the young.

The same is true of the network of 160 *Jugenddörfer* (youth villages) linked by the Christliche Jugenddorfwerk Deutschlands (CJD) a member of the Geneva-based World Federation of the YMCA. The first of these youth villages was founded in 1949 after the work begun in 1947 by a Protestant pastor, Arnold Dannemann, who gathered up homeless and orphaned young people who frequented the bombed railway station at Stuttgart, and found them food, shelter and training.

The CJD, which also runs primary and secondary schools, and caters for the exceptionally talented, as well as the disabled or educationally subnormal, prides itself on the slogan ‘No one must be lost’ and insists that this ‘applies just as much to parentless, “shoved-around” and consequently aggressive youngsters, and to young people who have come into conflict with the law’. Since the collapse of the former regime in East Germany, it has opened about 30 *Jugenddörfer* there, coping with what is seen as the need to catch up in the training of mentally handicapped people as well as with the demands of those ‘who, for decades, were ideologically overtaxed and vocationally neglected’.

The first impression that any visitor from abroad is bound to gain of the *Jugenddorf* at Frechen is of the sheer quality of the buildings and their surroundings. It provides for about 250 young people living in 21 houses with single or double rooms, as well as about 30 living in the locality and attending daily. The age-range is 16 to 26, and the ideology is of living and learning together, with a range of community facilities, as well as classrooms, and workshops for the building crafts, woodwork, metalwork, housecrafts, shop work, hairdressing, gardening and horticulture. Students are referred to the Jugenddorf by the Labour Office of the regional government and they are obliged to sign an undertaking to attend classes. Courses usually last three years, and Birgit Niclas of CJD told me that most students complete their course, with 90% passing their exams, and 70% find work at its end. Bed and board are provided, and students are paid DM160 a month pocket money.

These organisations operate on a non-sectarian basis within the policies of the Federal Employment Office’s Labour Promotion Act of the 1960s for ‘Courses to improve the opportunities of integration for young persons still

not ready to embark on a profession' and the Federal Ministry of Education's programme for the disadvantaged of the early 1980s, following the policy of 'Vocational Training for All'.

They are financed by grants from the Federal and Regional departments of employment and social welfare, and by subsidies and donations from industry, commerce and religious bodies. They co-ordinate their activities through an umbrella body BAG-JAW (*Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Jugendsozialarbeit Jugendaufbauwerk*) which links together five Federal organisations of Catholic, Protestant, independent, socialist and municipal federations and regional associations.

Julian Heddy supplies a list of their joint aims and activities.[6]

- to provide assistance for young people generally with regard to preparation for life, especially for working life
- to encourage pre-vocational as well as vocational training, retraining – and continuing education
- to offer measures or programmes for socially disadvantaged young people (unemployed, unqualified, or experiencing difficulties at home)
- to provide assistance to young people of German origin from Eastern Europe during the process of integration into German society
- to promote the integration of young immigrants and of children of foreign workers living in Germany
- to offer measures and programmes aimed at reducing disadvantages resulting from sexual or role-related discrimination
- to provide housing facilities in connection with the above-mentioned measures
- to promote the international mobility of young people.

Every major German city, like any European city from St Petersburg to Lisbon, has a series of subcultures of young people who resist incorporation into the mainstream of society. The example I cited above from Frankfurt is typical. So it is not surprising that, apart from the related cultures of drug use and prostitution, there is also a culture of the conscious rejection of what are perceived as the dominant social values. In Cologne, the most publicly visible manifestation of this is the Punk scene.

Walter Hermann is a former teacher, a pacifist activist who first claimed the attention of the citizens by setting up a tented camp of homeless people in the centre of one of the city's main boulevards. At the time of the Gulf War he shifted his focus to campaigning against war and his location to the Cathedral itself. He erected a series of frames in the forecourt suspending messages about the world's military disasters, which flowed in from visitors and sympathisers, and took up residence in a niche. The *Klagemauer für Frieden*, or Wailing Wall for Peace, became one of the sights of the city. Neither the Cathedral authorities nor the city council wanted the ignominy of evicting the Gandhi-like figure of Walter Hermann who won the support of the good and the great in German society. He has become their conscience.

However, in another corner of the Domplatz, between the Cathedral and the Museum of Roman Antiquities and the Philharmonic Hall is a concrete structure with a placard *Punkhaus*, occupied by the Punks – and their dogs. Walter Hermann has attracted intense hostility because he has championed them. Peace is a worthy cause, his critics say, but the Punks are something else.

He argues that the young drop-outs shared his criticisms of the consumerist society, where the wasteful affluence of rich nations was built upon the impoverishment of the poor world. Were they not also rebelling against the growth-obsessed, market-driven and unsustainable economies that were at the root of global problems? After I left him, and conscious that the Punk phenomenon is hardly new and was preceded by a long series of manifestations of youth rebellion, I asked one of the youth workers what the organisations federated in BAG-JAW could offer the people camped in the *Punkhaus*, begging for the tourists' small change.

He asked if I realised how hard it is for drop-outs to clamber back into ordinary life, and whether I had met anyone more pathetic than an ageing Punk.

> 'We want to grab them *before* they have despaired of parents, schools and work. If you find them a room and a job, it would last a week, and then they'd be back on the Domplatz. They'd say: "This room is a dump and this boss is an arsehole. I'm not putting up with it." It's the psychology of rejection reflected by the rejected.'

French Lessons

4

4. FRENCH LESSONS

Like the *Wanderjahre* of the journeyman in the ancient German craft guild system, the old French craft guilds or Compagnons du Devoir maintained a network of hostelries for apprentices as well as for young craftsmen making their journey around France. There the house-mother or *mère aubergiste* 'played an important role, because for young travellers she was a symbol of a reconstituted family'.[1] With the growth of entirely new industries and the factory system in the nineteenth century, the founders of the trade union movement, in the tradition of Proudhon's *mutualisme*, sought to create modern equivalents. The French equivalents of labour exchanges or job centres were founded over a century ago, not by government, but by the emerging unions, as organs of workers' solidarity, the *Bourses du Travail*.

Their national federation secretary, Fernand Pelloutier, one of the founders of the *Confédération Générale du Travail*, the major trade union federation, saw the *Bourses* not only as a job information and placement bureau, but as a mutual benefit society, a haven for travelling workers, and an education and training centre.[2] At the same time, both Catholic and Protestant religious bodies had become concerned about the physical and moral dangers facing young single people of both sexes who had left their rural homes to seek work in the big cities, and established hostels for them.

The inter-war years saw the French adoption of a series of bodies catering for the needs of the young (Scouts 1920, Guides 1923, Youth Hostels 1930), usually separated by religious or political allegiances. The phrase *Foyer de Jeunes Travailleurs* did not appear until the second world war and the years of occupation, and of conscripted labour for the young.[3]

Post-war economic policy for reconstruction and modernisation virtually ignored housing shortages, and completely neglected the needs of young single people. The shortage of labour in industrial towns and the absence of jobs in rural France led not only to a vast new rural exodus, but also to the demand for the labour of 310,000 overseas immigrants between 1951 and 1957.

> 'At the end of the war, less than half the French population lived in cities. About one million French peasants left the land for cities in the following 10 years. At the same time, the previously sluggish birth-rate rose steeply and France's total population expanded rapidly. By 1954, France was experiencing a housing shortage of gigantic proportions; 14 million people

> lived in overcrowded accommodation; half a million families lived in hotels or furnished rooms; several hundred thousand lived in makeshift shanty settlements; and about 10,000 families were squatting. The majority of the French population was in grossly inadequate accommodation.'[4]

Central government responded with a crash programme for the building of industrialised housing known as *grands ensembles*. Anne Power explains:

> 'The ending of the Algerian war in 1962 suddenly led to one million returning French settlers – *pieds noirs* – looking for jobs and housing ... Growing demands for unskilled labour were ironically partly fuelled by the need to build! This was a self-generating circle which continued into the late 1970s as more and more people arrived to man the vast building sites that ended up housing much of the construction workforce.'[5]

As in Britain, government housing policy and housing subsidies were conceived around the needs of families, and the existence of vast numbers of young, single workers of both sexes was ignored by the structure of housing provision. In 1955 the founders of the *Union des Foyers de Jeunes Travailleurs* (UFJT) undertook three difficult tasks. The first was to bring the disparate operators of hostels for young workers, with different political or religious backgrounds, into a voluntary association which could represent them all, and the second was to ensure that national and local housing policy should recognise that this aspect of housing provision was as worthy of grants, loans and subsidies as family housing. The third task was to provide a framework in which local groups of concerned citizens should meet the urgent needs of their own towns and cities, in ways that were within the budgets of young people. There was no shortage of work for them.

The network of Foyers grew rapidly, providing basic accommodation for young single people, often in dormitories, sometimes in cubicles, with shared washing facilities and canteen catering, as well as recreation rooms. The provision was very similar to that offered by the YMCA and YWCA hostels in Britain. But the place of young people in French society became steadily worse. Françoise Gaspard explains that by 1981:

> 'The economic situation had steadily worsened after 1974 and the young were the first victims. Among the 16 to 21 age group, there were already 600,000 who were unemployed or "economically inactive". This last

> category described young people without work who had not, for one reason or another, gone to the trouble of "signing on" for security benefits. More than half of wage-earners aged between 16 and 18 were in casual work. And at the end of every school year another 200,000 young people joined the labour market without any qualifications.'[6]

This is a familiar picture to British and American eyes, and was forced into the public perception by an explosion of petty delinquency and more serious crime, as well as growing problems of drug and alcohol abuse. At the same time, mass housing projects or *grands ensembles* of high-rise flats on the fringe of towns and cities generated their own problems. And meanwhile, changes in family relationships made leaving the nest an imperative for young people, not met by a bed-space in a dormitory.

In its role as a pressure group, the Foyer federation, the UFJT, continually impressed on government departments the need to expand and modernise the facilities provided for young people. The government agency for financing social housing, CDC (*Caisse de Dépôts et Consignations*) agreed in the late 1980s to provide the funds for a programme of modernisation of Foyer provision. In France, as in Britain, housing is aided from one government budget, vocational guidance from another, and the task of 'social integration' the responsibility of yet other sources of finance. However, the French network of Foyers has expanded the scope and scale of its activities and today about 500 such hostels provide accommodation for 50,000 young people. A team of British investigators found that:

> 'The Foyers are usually aimed at 16 (or 18) to 25 year-olds who are unemployed, seeking training/education or employed. They traditionally provide a low level of support and are not aimed at special needs groups (although a small proportion of residents may have special needs). The Foyers have their own form of residence contracts, where the Foyer undertakes to provide services and young people agree to observe rules. In addition, "unemployed residents may be required to sign a supplementary agreement whereby they undertake to make efforts to seek employment, to adhere to a job-seeking schedule jointly elaborated with the counsellor".'

The task of the Foyers had shifted from an emphasis on providing a roof for young people with work but no bed, to giving them a short-term home-

from-home until they had found a niche in the housing system, but concentrating attention on the task of *insertion*. This word has the same meaning in French as in English, but carries with it the connotation of induction not only into the world of work, social insurance and taxation, but into the adult world of neighbourhood concerns and solidarity, and concepts of acceptable and unacceptable social behaviour.

Several of the *animateurs* of the French Foyer movement articulated concerns felt in Britain too: the fear expressed many years ago in an American context by Richard Sennett, that the young, and more specifically, young men, are in modern society, 'frozen in an adolescent posture'.[8]

France, like Britain, witnessed changes in the legal status of the young, with the raising of the minimum age for leaving school to 16 and the lowering of the age of majority to 18, and the more significant change that the self-assurance, self-discipline and dignity through being self-supporting, of having a job, was evaporating with changes in the economy. And my informants also stressed the rift, as they saw it, between the culture of the family and the youth culture, part of which is the declaration of residential independence. Even though footloose mobility is a characteristic of the young, not to have a place of one's own, whatever the disadvantages of private landlords who would rather not have young tenants, is seen as a failure. A bed in a dormitory is perceived in the peer-group as an indication of an inability to make the system work for you.

Perceptions like this of the changed situation of youth, as well as the worsening of the labour market and the fact that after many years of hard use, many foyers were perceived as primitive and shabby, were behind the CDC funding of renewal and renovation as part of a wider programme of anti-poverty measures and rehabilitation in problem estates and the *grands ensembles*. This new investment was 'conditional upon a major review of the aims and services provided by individual Foyers applying for grants'. A series of evaluations was conducted on behalf of the CDC and the Ministry of Housing over three years by Michel Conan of the Centre Scientifique et Technique du Bâtiment.[9]

There are thus both new and shining Foyers with a high quality of provision, and grim ones in forbidding neighbourhoods. Isobel Anderson, reporting on her study visit made in the summer of 1993, noted:

> 'There are 37 Foyers in central Paris in total and the visits to nine of these gave an important insight into the role of Foyers in Paris. From discussions with researchers and people working with UFJT, however, it was clear that the Foyers in the Parisian suburbs and in the rest of the country may be very different from those in the centre of the capital.'[10]

Officers of the UFJT were equally frank with me. One told me for example of a particular neighbourhood in the Paris region where most of the buildings had been burnt down in civil disturbances, but the Foyer had been spared as it was perceived as friendly. The UFJT pursues a policy of '*intégration ethnique*' as a matter of principle, and is able to enforce this on the variety of local providers, since some funds are channelled through the central body. But once the number of non-white residents exceeds a certain proportion, it has been found that the particular Foyer may be avoided by young white people. This, in turn, leads to a perception that the institution is solely for the use of 'immigrants', even though the young people involved are likely to have been born and bred in France. A report submitted to the French Prime Minister in April 1996 called for the closure of 20 *foyers de travailleurs immigrés*, and although these were established over 30 years ago by HLM for a different clientèle from that of the *foyers de jeunes travailleurs*, both are seen by racists as undesirable.[11] The Foyer movement in France has continually sought to build close links with the neighbourhood, with its services, and of course, its restaurants, available to non-residents, so that it is perceived as a community asset, and a major factor in the local economy.

Grenoble, an ancient town in south-east France, with 'a mountain at the end of every street' as Stendhal put it, is the capital of the département of Isère in the Rhône-Alpes region. It has an old university, founded in 1339, and a proliferation of new ones, and is a centre for research in both nuclear power and hydro-electricity as well as in computer technology. It is also the base for a series of ski resorts on the mountain slopes. Its Foyer services began with the foundation of AWI, *l'Association pour le Logement des Jeunes dans l'Isère*, with one Foyer in 1959, set up as a result of the demands of the youth section of one of the trade union federations concerned with the problems of young workers obliged to move away from rural areas in search of work, in the years of full employment. Today it employs 123 people operating 11 Foyers, four of them the city, and the others scattered around the Isère region, as well as a network of other facilities. These include a Housing

Service, helping people aged between 18 and 25 to find rented accommodation, and a Resource Centre, concerned with professional training, particularly in the catering industry. The ALJI operates two restaurants open to the public in Grenoble, *Le Taillefer* and *La Cordée*, both of them on Foyer premises. One of the Foyers there also produces a monthly journal *Le Bon Plan*, edited by Foyer users and addressed to all recipients of housing benefit and a minimum wage.

The ALJI describes itself as an association whose task is 'the integration of young people into society, mainly through housing, but also through training, employment, health and leisure: everything which contributes to the forming of a citizen'.

When I questioned Bernard Faure, the director of ALJI, about the effectiveness of job training, since 1,583 young people had passed through its Foyers in 1995, he replied, 'Our first task is to help our residents to learn how to *be* rather than teach them how to *do*'. And he stressed that, considering the way that society has alienated its young at a vast social cost, the emphasis was on helping them to rediscover the habit of belonging to a community. The office of ALJI, dealing with accounting and administration, and with the complex task of winning funding, is, like two neighbouring Foyers, on one of the *grands ensembles*, the big public housing estates built between 1955 and 1975, which, like their equivalents in Britain, have been seen as the location for the usual social problems ever since.

The suburb of Grenoble known as the Village Olympique and Ville-Neuve was once welcomed for its provision of well-equipped housing for rent, but has suffered from the familiar syndrome of inadequate maintenance coupled with a disastrous fall in the family incomes of its inhabitants. The two Foyers there, Les Ecrins, a tower block itself, and Les Iles, have been given a very thorough rehabilitation and now provide high-quality single and double apartments with bathrooms. All residents have their own door key, mail-box and telephone number. Bernard Faure explained:

> 'They may have been excluded from society, or they may have excluded themselves from society, but we aim to preserve the privacy and dignity of the young people and to encourage them to form new social relationships, so as to be part of the neighbourhood and of the city.'

He explained that in some French cities the Foyer restaurants served from 500 to 600 meals a day, and that this was not only a valuable source of income but an important aspect of projecting the Foyer as a community asset. One staff member explained to me at Les Ecrins:

> 'Not so long ago this was perceived as a dangerous place. Now it seems peaceful and secure. We took the neighbourhood into our confidence about a rehabilitation plan, and this in turn led to the demand for a programme of renewal on the whole estate, and as you can see, this has actually happened.'

Bernard Faure, like everyone else I met in the French Foyer movement, stressed that the public cost of bringing social peace to the big, neglected concentrations of poverty in urban society is infinitely greater than the cost of maintaining a rescue operation for some of the young. The Foyers did not need to advertise their services, as they were known to parents and prospective employers, but most of all by word of mouth among young people themselves. Each young person accepted for residence becomes a member of the Association, and is asked to follow the normal rules about hygiene and noise. They are also asked to draw up a plan for their own futures based on a stay in the Foyer of about six months. As M Faure explained, 'We cannot meet all the expressed needs of the young. Sometimes the Foyer is not the best solution for them.'

So I asked about the situation of people whose personal problems were beyond the individual and social autonomy that the network of Foyers seeks to promote. He replied:

> 'Yes. We have, for example, a small house for eight young people who have come out of prison or who have been 'detoxified' and face the outside world alone. There is someone there to play a time-consuming pastoral role, and with the help of specialists and doctors from outside, to see whether over a period of about three months they can be fitted into a Foyer or indeed into independent living. We don't *want* to reject anyone.'

Like his equivalents in Germany, he stressed the need to motivate the jobless young *before* they reject the values of a society which had rejected them. The same point was made by Charles-Antoine Arnaud, the president of the UFJT, when he first addressed British enquirers into the role of the Foyer

movement in 1991: 'Young people feel guilty at not being in a job and if this goes on for too long they give up and then move down through a cycle of alienation. The job of the Foyers is to prevent this happening.'[13]

Recognition that France was lacking about two million jobs, and that consequently many young people need to create their own, led the UFJT to set up yet another organisation, the *Réseau d'Initiatives Locales pour l'Emploi* (RILE), with a programme adopted by over 30 Foyers since its inception in 1986. In 1993 M Arnaud told me that RILE had led to the creation of 800 small enterprises by the non-skilled unemployed in 15 French towns, and in 1996 M Faure told me that in the previous two years his network of Foyers had helped in the creation of 56 new enterprises in service trades.

In a paper produced for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Charles-Antoine Arnaud and Joëlle Vibet argue for 'a profound change in outlook' towards youth unemployment. They stress that 'there are alternatives to the humdrum jobs and low-grade employment offered to the young', and:

> 'The idea of setting up on one's own account, which is a long-established characteristic of working-class culture, is still very much alive among many individuals, who still have both the desire and the ability to do so.'

And they claim that half the pioneers of new enterprises in France do not have their *baccalauréat*, and that:

> 'The initiatives taken by the young non-skilled unemployed in the Foyers are ample proof of of their ability to organise themselves, to come up with new ideas, and to then market them, provided that they have access to the normal sources of finance.'[14]

The sense of urgency with which the French Foyer movement is exploring these possibilities was underlined by a report from the national statistical institute in September 1996 which found, not only that young people in France are poorer today than in the 1950s, but that young people's standard of living had declined by 15% since 1989.[15]

The Foyer Concept Comes to Britain

5

5. THE FOYER CONCEPT COMES TO BRITAIN

Despite the bleak economic climate, or perhaps as a result of a growing perception of the disaster for young people of the absence of jobs and the absence of housing, Foyers have spread across Britain in the 1990s. It is notoriously easier to win capital funding for new projects from both governmental and private sources for new ideas than to obtain continuing support to keep existing initiatives in operation. Foyers *were* something new.

The first British Foyer projects began in 1992. By the summer of 1996 there were 40 Foyers with about 2,000 bed-spaces and associated with move-on accommodation and facilities for the training of non-resident young people. Another 43 Foyers are in the process of development and a further 23 planned. This is a remarkable record of growth, which anyone who has sought to initiate anything must envy. I conclude that it is the result of three factors.

One is that some very well-informed people were involved from the start. They understood the mechanisms of funding and legislation in the two distinct fields of housing and job-training, as well as the art of lobbying in the right places. Another is the fact that bodies with a very long tradition of hostel provision, the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) and its sister body the YWCA, were involved, and could, through local decisions, add the Foyer function to existing hostels.

The third is the fact that the formula: No Home + No Job = No Hope was an effective and accurate way of describing the appalling situation of very many young people, visible every day, and night, in the city streets. Once the aspirations of the Foyer movement were grasped by thoughtful citizens, particularly those involved in housing associations, local authorities, or Training and Enterprise Councils, who could possibly be opposed to them?

The French organisation UFJT was given funds by the European Community to report on the housing of young people in various member states. The research was conducted by Julian Heddy who found that, beyond isolated initiatives, there were few attempts which matched the French Foyer movement in combining housing with training, job-finding, and enterprise creation services, and attention to issues of health and social integration. The

contacts established through this enquiry led to the reconstitution of an existing body linking member bodies in France, Germany and Denmark, as OEIL (Organisation Européenne des Associations pour l'Insertion et le Logement de la Jeunesse), and actively seeking connections with similar associations in other member nations like the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

Early in 1990, the author of the UFJT report[1] urged Sheila McKechnie, who was for 10 years the director of the housing charity Shelter, to attend the first meeting of OEIL in Paris. She had become increasingly concerned with shifts in policy which amounted to discrimination against the under-25 year-olds, and brought the authority of years of campaigning to the Paris meeting, returning with the conviction that the introduction of the Foyer concept to Britain could be 'the innovation of the 1990s ... the first positive attempt to help young people to become citizens, instead of treating them like so much litter on the streets'.

The vital link between an effective housing lobby and a well-known training provider was established, as Julian Heddy explains, when:

> 'Sheila McKechnie set to work building an alliance with the then chairman of Grand Metropolitan Community Services (GMCS), Richard Mann. GMCS was then the largest single non-governmental provider of training for young people in the UK, and had a good track record of commitment to basic skills training in the community (at local level) ... Between April 1990 and March 1991, Sheila McKechnie worked behind the scenes to construct a dialogue with potential UK partners to launch the Foyer idea.'[2]

Heddy records that when, in March 1991, Sheila McKechnie invited Charles-Antoine Arnaud to address an audience of civil servants, youth training bodies, housing associations, hostel managers and voluntary bodies:

> 'One of the aspects of the presentation by Charles-Antoine Arnaud which intrigued those who attended the meeting was that he did not attempt to hide the deficits between French Foyer theory and practice, openly admitting that they were often imperfect and did not always live up to the

> ideal. There was no blueprint, and each would-be Foyer developer would have to make mistakes and learn from them. Another aspect which impressed the audience that day was the accent placed on young people's rights and responsibilities in the Foyer context, and their right to a good quality physical and psychological environment and level of service. This was quite different to the "dependency culture" then so accepted in the UK by both the young people and those supporting them.'[3]

By November 1991 the two founding bodies had begun the process of setting up the nucleus for a Foyer Federation as a co-ordinating, training and advisory advisory body, with GMCS seconding Don Macdonald, the Federation's subsequent chief executive, for this purpose. By the beginning of 1992 they had won some strategically important partners, vital in uniting the previously separate worlds of housing and job training. It was valuable to have the involvement of the YMCA and YWCA with their networks of existing hostels, accommodating over 10,000 people every night in England alone, with many thousands more using its sports and recreational facilities. For readers whose impressions of the YMCA, a 150 year-old federation of local groups, were gathered in the past, it should perhaps be stressed that it is not a proselytising body, but 'a charity committed to helping young people, particularly at times of need, regardless of gender, race, ability or faith'.[4] The YMCA connection was important for the propagandists of the Foyer movement, needing to keep up the impetus to build up experience of operating the idea, and was equally useful for the YMCA activists in being seen to meet changing demands. Furthermore, the National Council of YMCAs is a registered Housing Association, eligible for grant aid from the Housing Corporation, the government's chosen means of financing housing today.

Other founder members included several other key housing associations, the venerable Peabody Trust, the London and Quadrant HA and the Look Ahead HA, which all played an important role in getting the first newly-built Foyers off the ground. Yet others were the charity Centrepoint and the Youth Homelessness Group, all with long experience of the grim realities of life for the homeless young. Centrepoint began its work in 1969 as a 'night shelter' in a Soho church crypt, and since 1989, the year of the Children Act,

has operated nationally. Its chief executives, Nick Hardwick and his successor Victor Adebowale, have continually stressed that the workload of their emergency service has steadily increased, and this is one reason for its keen involvement in the Foyer experiment. On its 25th anniversary, in 1994, the Camberwell Foyer, owned by London and Quadrant Housing Trust and managed by Centrepoint, opened its doors.

It is a high quality purpose-built environment, and was intended to be linked with a restaurant, open, as in the French Foyers, to the general public. It provides single rooms for 80 young people in 39 two-person self-contained flats and two single flats for people with disabilities, and it also contains a training centre used also by young people living locally. The greater part of the capital costs were met by a housing association grant from the Housing Corporation, topped up by grants from charitable trusts, a grant from Brixton Challenge and investment from the housing association itself.

The same complex interweaving of existing voluntary activity for the homeless and jobless with governmental and charitable sources was needed for the other newly-built Foyer in South London, the Gateway Project in Southwark. This opened in 1993 and provides short-term housing for 116 residents with an adjacent training centre, developed by the Peabody Trust and the Look Ahead Housing Association, aided by the City of London Corporation and the Housing Corporation, with job training facilities from GrandMet Trust and the London Enterprise Agency.

The task of winning the participation and financial support of long-established charities with agendas of their own must have called for endless time and diplomacy. But it enlisted valuable allies with their own vested interests in keeping the precarious Foyer venture afloat. The Peabody Trust, for example, acquired Bruce House in Covent Garden from Westminster City Council in 1992. This famous group of buildings had been built by the old London County Council in 1906 to offer inexpensive board and lodging for men employed in the West End. Peabody, with a host of supporters, has refurbished the buildings for several varieties of homeless people, including Foyer-type initiatives managed by Centrepoint and linked with a Skills Development Centre providing tenants with specialist training, employment advice and support, managed by the London Enterprise Agency.

In other cities and towns similar links had to be built up among bodies with a concern for the Foyer issue. An indispensable role in spreading the message and expertise has been played by the Foyer Federation for Youth in London. Quite apart from its task of spreading the message through meetings, conferences and training sessions, it has produced and continually updated and reprinted two vital publications. The first is the *Good Practice Handbook*, a vital guide through the complexities of running a Foyer, and its complicated finances.[5] The second is the *Design Handbook for Foyers*, an adaptation to British circumstances of a French text, which is important as it conveys to potential Foyer developers that they are concerned with something more than a hostel, and should seek to provide at the same time greater autonomy for residents and more positive links with the neighbourhood.[6]

The efficiently-promoted Foyer propaganda found a receptive audience among those people in every town who had witnessed, and perhaps suffered from, the demoralisation and misery of the workless, jobless young. They needed to learn the art of assembling support from a variety of official, semi-official and unofficial sources, with differing financial agendas; local authorities with constrained budgets but with possible sites or redundant premises, housing associations as the government's favoured vehicle for housing investment by way of the Housing Corporation, the Training and Enterprise Councils, and the Single Regeneration Budget. To these have been added the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Charities Board.

Every local coalition of enthusiasts has been obliged, usually through the invaluable clearing-house of the Foyer Federation staff, to master the techniques, favoured by current government policy of 'multi-agency partnership projects and cocktail funding'. In the Lottery gamble, it was reported in 1995 that:

> 'The National Council of YMCAs bid for a hefty £2.5m to cover over 30 projects nationally, but were disappointed only to receive £205,000. They must now decide how to apportion the funds and many YMCA Foyers will bid separately in the next round. Many of the Christian-based organisations involved in the Foyer movement have decided not to bid on

> principle and may be badly hit by cuts in other charitable giving.'[7]

The issue is complicated even further, since virtually all Foyers have been initiated by housing associations with funding (HAG) received from the Housing Corporation, by advice given to the National Lottery Charities Board from the Department of the Environment:

> 'We have been advised that under current Treasury rules, funding from the National Lottery is classified as public expenditure. Therefore, lottery money cannot be used to supplement HAG. HAG would be reduced pound for pound ...

'HAG would not be affected where lottery funding was contributing to non-qualifying costs. To take the example of Foyers, there would be no impact on HAG if the NLCB were funding the provision of training or employment advice facilities.'[7]

Nevertheless, in the second round of lottery awards, 10 Foyers received funding, totalling £1.3 million. The Federation noted: 'many were disappointed, however, and early indications suggest that several projects may have overbid'.[7] The art of applying for grant aid includes the very specialised technique of guessing the precise sum to be bid for. Six of the 10 Foyers awarded lottery money were those proposed by local committees of the YMCA. This body has also been fortunate in its pioneering role, in adding the Foyer role to its very long experience of operating hostels As a result of its original five pilot Foyers at Nottingham, St Helens, Norwich, Wimbledon and Romford, as well as that of the promotional activities of its National Council, it has issued its own design guide, *The Impact of Design on the Use and Management of Housing for Young People*.[8]

One of the problems faced by the pilot YMCA Foyers was the fact that the support and training services were applicable only to those eligible hostel residents who had opted for them.

> 'Joint assessment (and joint working) relied on high levels of co-operation between existing hostel staff and newly appointed employment and training support staff. Running the YMCA hostel and the "Foyer"

support services as two separate operations had an adverse effect on the morale of support staff as well as on operational procedures.'[9]

This difficulty has been overcome in the series of new and specifically Foyer projects operated by the YMCA and YWCA since then.

In the impressive spread of Foyers, almost doubling every year in the first four years, plenty have learned from the YMCA experience of combining hostel accommodation with facilities for non-residents. Most of the larger Foyers, whether operated by the YMCA or not, have sought to build up their pattern of what Don Macdonald calls 'clusters of services, so that you might have crèches, playgroups and keep-fit facilities and cafés as well, so that people using one facility will then use another'.

Thus the Wigan Foyer is a conversion and renovation of an old cotton mill, and also includes flats and offices and a business start-up centre, and the Tyneside Foyer opening in 1997 has been developed as a regional resource by a variety of agencies and local authorities, and will include 64 Foyer beds, in clusters of five; 20 permanent self-contained flats; job-search and general training suites; a training restaurant and a training centre for hairdressing and similar trades.

The Kirkcaldy Foyer in Fifeshire, Scotland, is part of the regeneration of a derelict, but listed building, a former rope mill, in the town centre, where facilities, apart from 44 Foyer beds, include a café, a job club, and offices for voluntary agencies.

The newly-built Salford Foyer, in which housing and training elements are separately funded, depended on an intricate choreography of finance. It was developed by a partnership of North British Housing Association and the YWCA, with support from the City of Salford, the Housing Corporation, the Employment Service, Manchester TEC, the European Regional Development Fund and the North British Housing Association itself.

In the escalation of interest in Foyers over the first four years, the role of the Federation has not been to initiate projects, since the impetus must come locally, but has been to provide intensive individual support for developing

proposals and to guide them through the thickets of applications for funding and of providing a voice in negotiations for government and business sponsorship. As the number of local initiatives expanded these support services demanded more and more working time, and the Federation itself has been the recipient of National Lottery Charities Board funding to develop its provision of advice to local initiatives.

Don Macdonald told me:

> 'When people ask us about siting schemes, we say, "Put them in town centre or high street sites where young people are not conspicuous, as they congregate there anyway". We always advise prospective developers to talk to local residents from the start. The second problem is that when Foyers *are* situated in residential areas, other youngsters in the area will say, "We don't like these people. They've got something we haven't got. Let's throw a stone through the window." Neutral areas like high street sites are involved neither in the territorial struggles of the young, nor in the territorial aspirations of the owner-occupiers.'

He also stressed that local enthusiasm and local knowledge were the guarantee of eventual success in Foyer projects. For quite apart from the introduction of the National Lottery, the question of funding is invariably a lottery, governed by luck. Again, Don Macdonald stressed the persistence of individual bodies.

> 'In 1992 I went to talk to a relatively small housing association in a very depressed part of Merseyside. They had the idea of developing a Foyer in a local former pub. This never happened, but four years later they have made links with other bodies and have another site where they will probably have a project next year, but they have quite clearly maintained their commitment to the idea for five years.'

Like all unofficial bodies dependent on official money, the Federation takes care that the opening speakers at its conferences are the spokesmen of the two major parties. I joined the 350 people attending the National Conference in November 1995, to hear James Clappison, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department of the Environment, warn:

> 'At a time when resources are stretched I think it is important that Foyer schemes are targeted on those in greatest housing need. It makes little sense to use scarce housing resources to provide accommodation for young people who could perfectly well make the transition to independence from the parental home, but may be attracted to the idea of sharing with a group of their peers. Indeed the Government firmly believes that the best place for most young people is in the parental home until they can afford to meet their own housing costs.'[10]

The opposition spokesman, Ian McCartney, Shadow Minister for Employment, stressed the job-seeking aspect. He quoted TUC figures of young people six months after leaving Youth Training. Only 31% were in work and 30% were without a qualification. He also cited Employment Service research which shows a very strong relationship between accommodation insecurity and failure to complete youth training and urged that:

> 'The Foyer initiative offers the kind of creative approach needed to meet our employment objectives and opportunities to link job creation and available jobs with affordable housing.'[11]

Predictably, the assembled Foyer delegates were dismayed at the first of these political statements since it displayed ignorance of a situation they encounter every day. Many young people have to leave the parental home because they are thrown out, or because the family breaks up, or simply to escape from an insupportable situation. This truth was strongly endorsed in the findings of the inquiry set up by 10 leading housing and youth charities, published as *We Don't Choose to be Homeless*.[12] The second political statement was welcomed in view of the claim that 'The Foyer programme is proving more cost-effective than comparable Government schemes and is reaching those young people whom other schemes do not' and that 'Because young people are involved in planning their own programmes which are flexible, there is greater participation than in YT (which disadvantaged young people see as second best)'.[13]

But in fact, in a political climate where it is thought to be an electoral disaster to envisage an increase in public spending, the Foyer movement is

unlikely to win firm government endorsement. Nor has it any guarantee that the policies of publicly-funded bodies like the Housing Corporation, the Single Regeneration Budget or the Training and Enterprise Councils will continue to invest in Foyers.

The Foyer movement in Britain has succeeded in four years in putting itself on the map, in the worst possible political climate. It has made itself too useful to be allowed to die from official neglect.

Small Town Blues

6

6. SMALL TOWN BLUES

Attention to the needs of young workers and jobseekers, as well as of the homeless young, has always focused on the cities, for obvious reasons. The city provided opportunity and stimulation absent from the country and the small town, and migration there was an obvious reason for making the inevitable declaration of independence from the parental home.

The situation has changed remarkably over the past quarter of a century. Rosalind Humphrey describes the dramatic changes since the London charity Centrepoint opened its first shelter for homeless young people in 1969.

> 'In the early days, most of the young people were young men in their late teens and early twenties who came to London from the North to look for work and a new life. Today, 40% of the young people are under 18, and 55% are from the Greater London area.'

A far larger proportion were young women, and the reasons for homelessness have been completely reversed in the last decade:

> 'In 1987, "pull" factors, such as moving to find work or needing to establish their independence, were given as reasons for leaving their last home by half the young people. "Push" factors, such as being told to leave or arguments, accounted for 44%. By 1993-4 "pull" factors had fallen to 14%, while 86% had been forced to leave home. Such statistics speak volumes about the erosion not only of economic and employment opportunities but also of so-called "family values" which the last decade has witnessed.'[1]

Whether as a result of family values or social pressures, young people in small towns and villages who have failed to find a job or to get enrolled on a training course are made continually aware of their situation, and are isolated by their lack of access to personal transport. Long ago the sociologist Stanley Cohen described the 'edge of desperation' among the young people congregating in the centres of small provincial towns.[2] Local initiatives in the Foyer movement have recognised the desirability of residential and job training in small centres of population as much as in big cities. In France an unexpected and unwelcome by-product of the decentralisation of government in the early 1980s, known as the *Projet Gaston Defferre*, has been

the unwillingness of municipal authorities to support services for young people from elsewhere, declaring that they should return to their place of origin. For English readers this has echoes of the old Poor Law, pushing paupers beyond the parish boundaries.

Bernard Faure of the *Association Pour le Logement des Jeunes dans L'Isère* told me of the Foyer movement's opposition to this tendency, since 'one of the first aims of Foyers is to facilitate mobility among the young, not only regionally, but nationally and internationally'. But his organisation has been careful to ensure that seven of its 11 Foyers are spread around the Isère region, to enable young people to have not only a local haven but a springboard from which to launch themselves into the outside world.[3]

In Britain, as we have seen, the tendency for the workless, homeless young to take the train or coach to the big city has abated since word got around about the horrors of life on the street, but far from the big urban centres there remains an image, as Allan Kennedy, a detached youth worker, called it, 'of isolation and depression, of young people experiencing little more than shadows of adolescence'.[4] The Foyer pioneers here have been aware that there is as much need for such a facility in small towns as in large cities.

Sleaford in Lincolnshire is a town of about 10,000 people, seen by the young as isolated and a long way from anywhere. It is 14 miles from Grantham, and about 18 miles from Boston, Newark or Lincoln. The Foyer was developed by a complex partnership in converting a large Edwardian house in Deansgate which had been extended in the 1970s for use as offices for a local council department, and was waiting for a new use.

A process of juggling support from a variety of public and private supporters, including the local authorities and the Department of the Environment Housing Partnership Fund, led to the Sleaford Foyer, operated by Leicester Housing Association, opening with 28 furnished rooms within 10 'clusters' each sharing a lounge, kitchen and bathroom, and 12 one-bedroom flats for use as 'move-on' accommodation. In 1995 it was expanded to provide 54 units.

The training component is provided by MainTrainer, the training unit of Grantham College in association with Lincolnshire TEC. Apart from the

benefit to the Foyer from the rental income for part of the premises, this enables the College to operate its first 'outreach' in this isolated small town, and this in turn makes the Foyer a place to which ordinary residents go automatically. This kind of interaction, which in the French Foyers is usually provided by the restaurant, open to all, is very important in overcoming the hostility of residents to this settlement of footloose young people in their midst.

Paul Hulley, the first manager of the Sleaford Foyer, who has moved on to open the Norfolk Park Foyer in Sheffield, told me that there was never any difficulty in attracting residents to the Sleaford venture, mostly by word of mouth among the young. 50% came from the town itself, and 40% from the nearby villages, and most of the rest from really remote villages in the rural hinterland. These figures seem to me to illustrate the huge unmet need for an escape from the family home for young people who, through changes in the job market beyond their control, have failed to meet family expectations.

In 1992 a group of specialists was asked by the European Commission to report on the exclusion and isolation of the young, common to six member states of the European Union. They looked at poverty, unemployment, low income (or no income), health and housing situations. They found that the absence of work and consequently of personal income, and the limitations of the modern nuclear family combined to produce a decline in personal contacts and dialogue with others, leading to weakened self-confidence, fear of failure and an overwhelming barrier of loneliness.

> 'Young homeless people, particularly those who have made a break with their families and their former social environment, are made especially vulnerable by their limited ability to communicate. They fear both scorn for their evident failure to meet social norms, as well as the indifference of others to their predicament. Isolation is also a problem for those who have simply left home to start training or take up a job in a new area, even though they have the opportunity to form new relationships with like-minded people in the same situation.'[5]

Their report relates this experience of failure and rejection to the formation of territorial youth gangs at one corner or other of municipal housing estates, and their protective shield of aggression towards some other gang or towards

society in general. This report sees the Foyer movement as one of a series of interventions in small communities as much as in the suburbs of big cities, to help the young to break out of this social isolation and to build up the social dimension in their lives.

Braintree in Essex is an old market town, far from the isolation of Sleaford. Its population is around 29,000 and it is within commuter distance of London, and of other Essex towns which once had a variety of light manufacturing industries. The town used to be associated with famous firms like Crittalls and Courtaulds, who were big employers and local benefactors well within living memory. But today, as the Foyer activists observe, the area has experienced 'a dramatic increase in homeless and jobless young people'. In practice, the Foyer reports: 'The two dominant reasons for young people applying for Foyer residency were relationship breakdown in the home and a need for independence.'[6]

It is the result of the collaboration of a variety of public and private bodies. The site was donated by Braintree District Council, the premises were designed and built by the Salvation Army Housing Association which is also concerned with training, together with Braintree College and local businesses, Essex TEC and the Jobcentre. The Foyer is managed by the Blackwater Housing Association, and consists of 32 single rooms in clusters, including units for disabled people. There are also 25 flats on the same site for move-on accommodation and another 20 move-on spaces became available in 1996. The Foyer has an equal distribution of places between the sexes and 30% of residents are aged under 18. It is hoped to reduce this proportion to not more than 25%. It sees its main problem to be the lack of staff, and is hoping to receive additional funding under the heading of Special Needs Management Allowance (SNMA). Its staff consists of a full-time resident manager, a training co-ordinator available three days a week, and a part-time administrator. The conditions for residence at the Braintree Foyer are much the same as those anywhere else:

> 'The criteria for admission are that the young person is in housing need and committed to train and/or to seek employment. The initial tenancy is conditional on satisfactory progress during a one-month period of probation.

The young people may come from a disturbed family background, be referred by the probation service, have been homeless and sleeping rough. The young people may refer themselves, but most referrals are from the Council, which has nomination rights. Each young person is required to prepare a personal Action Plan together with the Training Co-ordinator.'

These two examples of small town Foyers raise several general issues. The first is the overwhelming evidence that a great deal of personal misery among the young would be averted if we had already realised the aim of the Foyer Federation: a network of Foyers covering the whole country. The next is that every Foyer needs a core of promoters and supporters, sophisticated enough to penetrate the labyrinth of official funding sources, the possibilities of sponsorship from private enterprise and the grants that might be available from bodies like the Prince's Trust, the National Lottery Charities Board or the European Community. (The Foyer Federation warns hopefuls: 'Running a project using EC funds is not for the faint-hearted and can be an enormously complex and time-consuming task'.)[7]

A third issue is that of the precarious revenue accounts of small Foyers. Very large housing associations can carry losses and rectify them in the next financial year. But Annabel Jackson Associates, studying 20 Foyers in the period ending in September 1995, reported:

> 'The integration of Foyers within housing functions – which is central to the Foyer concept – is difficult to achieve without long-term funding commitments. Several schemes have been forced to keep Foyers as separate, free-standing projects to reduce the organisational disruption which would occur were the Foyer to close. Two of the Foyers have been under threat of closure pending funding decisions. It is our view that some of the existing schemes will have to terminate their Foyer services if funding is not found soon.'[8]

Linked with the issue of small town Foyers is that of appropriate size. This of course applies equally to any other services outside big towns, from schools to post offices. Once again, Annabel Jackson reports that, asked about the ideal size, Foyer managers identified two contrary pressures. These were:

> 'desire to make the Foyer small enough to retain a community feeling, and need to have sufficient critical mass to justify the full range of support services and retain capacity for fundraising. There is a second balance between levels of funding and levels of demand. Most Foyers described their own size as the ideal, with some feeling that over 150 would be too large.'[9]

Neighbours too, would doubtless express some feelings. Both the small town Foyers I have described have made great efforts to establish themselves as an asset to the local community. At Sleaford this aim was helped by the fact that Grantham College was able to base its local courses there, automatically bringing people in to use meeting rooms and the canteen. At Braintree the training facilities are used by local employers and social services including a 'drop-in' centre for people interested in fostering children, and a mother and toddler group, while the café provides a meeting place which has 'also hosted numerous children's birthday parties and even a wedding reception'.

At Stroud in Gloucestershire, the possibility of hostility between the Foyer and its residents has been deflected by the addition of a 10-bed unit to an existing range of facilities known as Painswick Inn. These include a café, a Citizens' Advice Bureau, Housing Aid Centre, Print Workshop, Bakery, Arts Project, Community Hall, Telecottage and Craft Centre. It is managed by Shire Training Workshops in partnership with Knightstone Housing Association.

Such multiple uses are not merely an economic necessity in attempting to bridge the gap between revenue and expenditure. They are also important in linking the special needs of one group with those of the young as a whole and with those of other age groups. They engender the consciousness that the Foyer is part of, and an asset to, the whole community, too valuable to lose.

The Passion for Assessment

7

7. THE PASSION FOR ASSESSMENT

All through the 1980s and 1990s a new language and a new way of thinking closely connected with it began to take over the non-commercial activities of central and local government as well as of unofficial and voluntary organisations. It was propagated in schools of management and business, and the vocabulary and assumptions of every kind of public activity were, with little opposition, subjected to ideologies perfected in the selling of one, rather than another, brand of car, soap powder or computer.

This new language has been applied indiscriminately to health services with the concept of an 'internal market', to public transport where the fact of 'travellers' has been displaced with the myth of 'customers' and to schools where 'league tables' have led to the exclusion of those troublesome children whose individual performance would lower that of the school considered as a successful business. It even affects the Jobcentres, which originated as Employment Exchanges, where the staff are themselves recruited with the assumption of performance-related pay, and of effective time-management in order to reach their performance targets.

Since the Foyer movement was launched in Britain in this particular climate, and since it has been heavily dependent on public funding as well as, to a far lesser extent, on support from industry, it has inevitably been faced by a continuing need to justify itself by results. And since Foyers aspire to cope with not only the housing needs of young people but with the task of helping them into jobs, they have had to justify themselves to several different departments of government. Some had aid from the Employment Service (ES) and from the Department of Education and Science (DES) and although these bodies were later amalgamated to form the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), different caches of public funding all require specific justification for expenditure. But meanwhile yet another branch of government, the Department of the Environment (DoE) feels that it is funding activities that properly belong to other budgets.

In particular, the Housing Corporation (HC) has, as a result of policy in the 1980s and 1990s, become the main channel for government grants and loans

for housing projects, and its own chosen vehicle has been Housing Associations which have had a key role in newly built or newly adapted Foyers. So quite apart from private charitable funding or help from Training and Enterprise Councils, locally-based but themselves dependent on public money for 95% of their income, Foyers have to justify themselves to innumerable agencies on several grounds.

There is no doubt that this is an expensive and time-consuming procedure, occupying too much of the working hours of Foyer staff. The evaluation of Foyers by Annabel Jackson Associates reports: 'One Foyer estimated that the administration for the Housing Corporation returns costs £30,000 per annum'.[1]

Similar difficulties face the Foyers' links with the further education system, since so many young people have rejected, or been rejected by, the education industry. Over the years many further education colleges have responded to the challenge of youth unemployment with 'open door' policies inviting young people to sample their courses. Until 1993 colleges were under the control of local education authorities and record-keeping was simple. They were then made dependent on the Further Education Funding Council, and:

> 'Now the FEFC wants to know a student's previous qualifications, the outcome of all courses,sources of funding and, most controversially, the destinations of students once they complete a programme. The Department for Education and Employment also wants data on student destinations, which is seen as a means of monitoring the effectiveness of the FE sector. The scale of this challenge was shown by the problems with the Individualised Student Record (ISR) which requires colleges to record about 60 different facts on each student.'[2]

Since the young are notorious for changing their minds as well as changing their addresses without informing the outside world, the 'complete nightmare' of accountability gives colleges a strong incentive to exclude unlikely candidates because of their potential effect on the statistics.

The passion for assessment also affects the Foyer initiative. Foyers are judged by both governmental and private funding agencies by a crude percentage of

residents who have succeeded in finding a job. This may be inevitable but it is unfortunate at several distinct levels.

The first is because sophisticated people no longer believe the statistics of employment and unemployment. As a former member of Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet put it, the record of the years up to 1992 'would look even more appalling but for the government having fiddled the measurement some 22 times'.[3] Only three years later, Will Hutton was to claim: 'More than 30 changes to the definition of unemployment have been devised by officials at the Department of Employment.'[4] When any kind of casual work is counted as a job, the definition is stretched beyond meaning.

There is also the phenomenon known as double counting. I was present at a meeting where a Foyer manager explained that several agencies might claim the same successful outcome for a client. She was supported in this by a Jobcentre officer from the audience who explained about the pressures on staff to justify their own jobs by clocking up results on the chart of performance targets visible both to them and to the jobless applicants.

The second unfortunate result of seeing job placement as the indicator of the success or failure of investment in Foyers is that it focuses attention only on the instantly measurable aspect of the Foyer's work. This was evident in the responses of Foyer staff to Annabel Jackson's investigation. She found that 'most Foyers are frustrated with the current emphasis on output measures' for reasons which included 'the view that current measures misrepresent and undervalue the real nature of Foyers, which should not be seen as guaranteeing jobs', the 'view that Foyers are about giving residents a fresh start rather than limiting them with classifications and labels'. A final, and unfortunate, result was the 'feeling that excessive monitoring implies a lack of trust in Foyer staff'.[5]

A third hazard of seeing job placement as the sole criterion by which Foyers are judged is that it ignores regional differences. We can prophesy that a Foyer in Sunderland would be less 'successful' than one in St Albans, simply because, as David Ashton found, a young man's chance of being unemployed in the first town was one in three, and in the second, one in 33.[6] A final serious consequence is the temptation it presents for Foyers to exclude

difficult cases, because of their potential effect on the statistics and the greater demand they are likely to make on staff time.

It is known in Foyer circles that in 1988 one government department commissioned a report on the French Foyer network and rejected it. But the first evaluation of the British experience came very early in its short history. John Malyn, who had been seconded from the Employment Service, issued a progress report, published by the Employment Department in 1973.[7] Then the Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned Isobel Anderson of the University of Stirling and Deborah Quilgars of the University of York to study the pilot initiatives, consisting of the five Foyer projects developed in existing YMCA hostels, and the first two purpose-built Foyers before they were actually brought into use. (The Camberwell Foyer in South London, developed by the London and Quadrant Housing Trust, and the Salford Foyer, developed by the North British Housing Association.) These researchers had been commissioned in 1990 by the Department of the Environment to report on *Single Homeless People*[8], and had studied the French Foyer movement. They monitored the pioneer Foyers between January 1992 and March 1994.[9] Their report carefully emphasises the problems, both in funding and in the task of selecting and helping users, that have faced the Foyer pioneers.

The third report on the Foyer initiative came from the charity Youthaid, founded in 1977 to support unemployed young people, and giving particular attention to the most disadvantaged, from ethnic or linguistic minorities or facing other handicaps, or those, aged 16 and 17, who are usually ineligible for Housing Benefit. With the support of another registered charity, Charity Projects, the Youthaid report, by Balbir Chatrik, was published in February 1994.[10] It reflected the outrage felt by Youthaid and The Children's Society at the consequences of the reduced eligibility for Social Security benefits accompanying changes to the Youth Training Scheme, now known as Youth Training (YT), reported in their joint publication *A Broken Promise* in 1992.[11]

A fourth report was commissioned by Tarmac plc under its chairman, Sir John Banham, the former Director-General of the Confederation of British Industries. Conducted by Annabel Jackson Associates, it examined the job-

placement record of 16 Foyers, and while finding a high success rate in job-finding, stressed the importance of 'soft skills' which are hard to measure, rather than on vocational training. Paradoxically, one of the range of 11 problems encountered during their establishment reported to Annabel Jackson by Foyer managers was 'antagonism created by the Youthaid Report'.[12]

If attempts to evaluate Foyers can lead to mere antagonism, we might conclude that they should be left in peace to find their own role through trial and error, but for the fact that they can never be self-supporting. They are bound to be dependent on the unpredictable whims of government policy as well as on the input from private enterprise. Like endless other social enterprises, they are involved in bidding for money in a lottery as unpredictable as the National Lottery, and are obliged to present an image of success. Nor are their evaluation trials over. In June 1996 the Department of the Environment announced that later in the year it would be putting out for tender a research project on the evaluation of Foyer schemes. The Department explained:

> 'This research will establish the extent and range of "foyer" type initiatives in England with details of scheme objectives, size, costs, funding sources and client groups through an audit of schemes in operation and development. There will be a more detailed evaluation of those in operation, with case studies of a range of schemes identifying innovative practice.'[13]

People within the Foyer movement know that what will 'sell' the concept is the figure that can be claimed of young people who succeeded in getting work balanced against the cost of operating the Foyer. Thus when Don Macdonald of the Foyer Federation had the opportunity to write in *The Guardian* he was able to claim on the basis of Annabel Jackson's study of nearly 2,000 young people:

> 'Results show that 80% improved their lives; 55% moved into employment and around 30% into training. Because young people are involved in planning their own programmes which are flexible, there is greater participation than in YT (which disadvantaged young people see as second best).'[14]

Like any campaigning group, the initiators of the Foyer movement in Britain depended on what is known as 'a good press' and carefully cultivated the attention of the media. People like a dramatic and simple story, and Foyers were presented as the solution to the appalling spectacle of young people sleeping rough in shop doorways and begging in the streets of our cities. This was not the intention of the founders, who from the beginning of their campaign stressed:

> '*Foyers will not:* Provide for young people with special needs. Provide accommodation for those in further or higher education. Provide for people over 25 years of age. Provide emergency accommodation for the young homeless.'[15]

There were reasons for all these initial exclusions, one of which was the wish not to duplicate existing facilities, but it is pointless to blame Foyers for not being what they did not set out to be. As Sheila McKechnie put it to me:

> 'Anyone who thinks you can pick up young people from the bottom of the pile and oblige them to sign an agreement to be good and undertake job training just doesn't know how bad things are. Foyers are not a universal response, they are one of the missing parts in the jigsaw.'

Ideally, of course, people can move up from emergency shelters to the comfort of the Foyer. Centrepoint operates both emergency shelters and the Camberwell Foyer with its relative luxury. Rosalind Humphreys describes how:

> 'Centrepoint's cold weather shelter in a former office block in Leicester Square bears witness to the effects of sliding into long-term homelessness and sleeping rough. Most of the young people are unwilling to talk. They look dishevelled and alienated and some are clearly suffering from mental health problems. The atmosphere is subdued. Staff try to help with the myriad of problems that the long-term homeless bring with them.'[16]

She contrasts this with the demands made on residents at Camberwell:

> 'Residents must make use of the on-site training centre for career assessment and guidance, and/or basic educational skills, work skills

> training and a job search facility. Before being accepted for accommodation a prospective resident must agree to a personal action plan which is incorporated in the licence agreement. The action plan is tailored to the individual's needs and charts the steps necessary to obtain a home and a job. It is reviewed every three months, residents staying at the Foyer for up to two years.'[17]

Some people believe that these are very onerous conditions of tenancy, an aspect of the new authoritarianism in youth policy, like the introduction of the Jobseeker's Allowance to replace Unemployment Benefit and Income Support. There is no evidence that it is seen in this light by Foyer residents. The Rowntree report found that very few people left a Foyer because of a failure to use the services as a condition of residency. The Annabel Jackson report found that the personal action plan or personal development plan delivered on a one-to-one basis can be a breakthrough for residents who reject 'the regimented approach of mainstream programmes' or who have failed to respond to previous training or education courses. But it cannot be made a condition of entry for rough sleepers desperate for shelter for the night.

For the majority of the homeless young today family difficulties are the reason for their plight, and the first task of bodies like Centrepoint and the consortium of bodies like the Peabody Trust who started the Gateway Foyer in Southwark is to prevent them from drifting into long-term homelessness. For as yet another of the housing charities in London found in 1996, more than half of the men and women who entered its hostels, leave them only to return to the streets.[18] Foyers are at the apex of the task of restoring self-confidence and hope. The Rowntree report found that 47% of residents had slept rough and that 42% had been in trouble with the police.

The Foyer Federation requires all members to adopt its Equal Opportunities Policy, and critics of the Foyer movement have drawn attention to the Rowntree report's findings that 'the vast majority of Foyer acceptances were white males'. Annabel Jackson's report of May 1996 comments:

> 'The bias was, of course, inevitable given that the pilots were YMCAs offering Foyer services to their existing residents. The average across the

> 16 Foyers for which I have data is that 65% of Foyer residents are male and 35% female ... Ethnicity is very variable: the percentages of ethnic minorities ranges from nil to 80%. Of the 16 Foyers for which I have data, five have over half of their residents from ethnic minority groups.'

But perhaps the commonest criticism of the Foyer initiatives is its alleged failure to address 'special needs'. One Foyer manager said to me, 'If you reckon we don't cater for special needs, you should meet some of our clients'. So I did, and perhaps because I obviously belong to the generation of grandparents rather than that of parents and officials, they told me plenty of tales of disadvantage, callousness and sheer bad luck. All young people have their own special needs.

Special Needs and Special Rents

8

8. SPECIAL NEEDS AND SPECIAL RENTS

All of us have special needs, and the young, just for being young, have more than most. But in the language of social welfare, special needs are defined differently by various agencies of government. One key list is that of the Housing Corporation,[1] which lists the following:

- people with a physical disability, including degenerative and debilitating illness
- people with learning difficulties
- people with problems related to mental health
- people with problems related to drugs or alcohol
- people leaving penal establishments, referred by the probation service, or at risk of offending
- refugees
- people at risk or leaving care
- vulnerable women with children
- women at risk of domestic violence
- frail elderly people.

Obviously not all these special needs fall within the ambit of the Foyer movement. Its target group is carefully defined:

> 'Foyers aim to help young people between 16 and 25 who need accommodation and minimal support in order to find and retain a job or training and establish themselves in an area. Foyers provide for young people who are ready to move forward and who need some help to organise this and to sustain their motivation. It is important to establish and maintain a positive and responsible culture within the Foyer and it will therefore be necessary to have a balance of residents, the majority of whom will not require a large amount of staff support. The primary general needs group at which the Foyer is aimed, however, is likely to be young people who have not had significant social or economic advantages in the past and who without appropriate intervention may go on to become homeless or experience other problems.'[2]

To this is added the hope that 'A wide range of young people and a balanced community will lead more easily to the establishment of a peer group, which

gives rise to a positive and responsible culture amongst the residents'.[3] The initiators know that the young learn more from each other than from external mentors. But staffing costs, which are of course the largest item in any Foyer's precarious annual budget, are based on the assumption of 'ordinary' young people, rather than those with special needs. In practice, of course, all residents have their own problems and have to be helped in solving them. The stories of individual young people exemplify this. Within the official categories, people with physical disabilities should not present special problems. Every new Foyer follows a careful design code to cater for those with special needs in a purely physical sense.[4] Other particular services should be within reach of the Foyer staff.

The same should be true of people with learning difficulties. The phrase covers a range of handicaps ranging from the devastating to the surmountable. Those Foyers with close links with other services for the young are able to cope. For example, the two purpose-built Foyers in South London share activities with a range of training bodies. The Gateway Foyer run by a consortium of the Peabody Trust, the Look Ahead Housing Association, and the GrandMet Trust, together with the Camberwell Foyer, developed by the London and Quadrant Housing Trust and managed by Centrepoint, formed an alliance with other bodies and the local TEC to set up the employment agency called Streets Ahead Recruitment at 129 Kingsway in central London.

This agency aims to help young people 'whose confidence has been eroded by homelessness and unemployment' and intends to cater for 'job-ready' candidates but also seeks to help people reach that stage (keeping, among other things, a reserve of smart clothes). The manager, Shane Hickey, explained: 'We have just spent 35 hours helping one applicant brush up his interview skills and improve his CV – and he has just got work'.[5] Few Foyer staff can find these hours, let alone the expertise. The important thing is that they should have access to the people who know how.

But the most obvious category of special needs is young people emerging from the care of local authorities at the age of 16 or 18. They have been placed in care for a variety of reasons, most of which result from the failures of others rather than from their own. It is a melancholy fact that people leaving care are

most at risk by innumerable criteria. In studying the 'Care Careers' of young people, Bob Coles verifies the finding that 'there is a well established link between deprivation and children coming into care. Put crudely the majority of children in care are the children of the poor.' Their educational attainments are miserable. Over two-thirds of people from care entering the labour market were found to have no educational qualifications by the age of 18. As Coles notes: 'This, it seems, has devastating consequences, and occurs at a particularly critical moment in young people's lives'.[6]

In terms of housing need, the problem was spelt out in the government report *Single Homeless People*, which found:

> 'A high proportion of young adults in hostels and B&Bs, but particularly those ages 16 to 17, had stayed with foster parents or in a children's home at some stage in their lives. Twice as many young adults aged 18 to 24 as those aged 16 to 17 had stayed in a young offenders' institution. Three times as many 18 to 24 year-olds as those aged 16 to 17 had stayed in prison or a remand centre. In both age groups, 6% said they had stayed in a psychiatric unit or hospital.'[7]

It is hard to interpret these findings. They may indicate a growing unwillingness of magistrates, as opposed to Home Office ministers, to use the penal system as a weapon against the young, or they may be a reminder that some young people have a growing capacity to find a niche in adult life regardless of initial devastating disadvantages. But to people concerned with finding a place in the diminishing world of jobs that don't actually reflect a low valuation of their human value, this particular life-history is a disadvantage. You or I would conceal it if we could.

People leaving care are just the people struggling with the transition from dependence to adult life for whom the Foyer is a valuable institution, and whatever the official targets are, Foyers cater for many of this group. The fact that people between the ages of 16 and 18 are excluded from certain benefits and consequently cannot pay a Foyer rent is unimportant. In the first place, a variety of the disadvantaged young are entitled to claim 'severe hardship payments'. Eligibility for these is not defined but almost all applicants are successful, probably because the Department of Social Security dislikes the

publicity that could accompany a refusal in the appalling situations that arise from the plight of some 16 and 17 year-olds.[8]

As Don Macdonald of the Foyer Federation remarked:

> 'Foyers are not special needs hostels, but I am not saying that they are going to exclude special needs young people. In fact there is some research that suggests that young people with special needs do better in a mixed setting than when they are mixed together with other particular categories like young offenders or drug users.'[9]

The problem that arises is that of staffing levels. Staffing is, of course, the biggest single item in the annual costs of Foyers, and the Federation's good practice handbooks assume staffing levels for housing management to be one to 15 for projects with below 40 to 50 residents, and 1 to 20 for projects with over 50. These figures include the manager but exclude administrative and night staff, and assume a separate budget for training and vocational staff. This in itself reflects the fact that housing associations operate under one set of government rules and opportunities for funding, while social welfare and job training are concerned with other rules and different budgets. But some people's multiple problems clearly span them all and obviously demand more staff time. The issue was put to me in an interesting way by the very experienced manager of one Foyer in its planning stage:

> 'What will be the spur to rejection of possible residents will be the simple lack of resources. I will have a core staff team of two-and-a-half project workers, plus administrative staff and night security. These staff members will be working with 60 young people. I have had an informal approach from the local social services department about taking some care leavers. My position is that I'll take them, just as I would take anybody, not because they are care leavers, nor because they are homeless, but because they can benefit from being at the Foyer. Their response has been to say "If you will take 20, we'll put a worker in". That's an offer that is hard to refuse, but it doesn't take much of a leap of the imagination to realise that we would get the most difficult to place of these unfortunate young people. It would tip the balance of the community too far in one

> direction, and I don't want the relations between the Foyer and its neighbours soured from the start by serious behavioural problems.'

Dilemmas like this indicate the level of diplomacy and careful calculation of risk that Foyer managers have to employ. Another of their delicately balanced equations is that of rent levels. The Foyer Federation's handbook puts the issue bluntly:

> 'The rents must not be so cheap that young people cannot afford to leave the Foyer, but must also not be so expensive that they keep them in a benefits trap. Having reasonably inexpensive rents which compare favourably with local independent social housing must be one of the developers' primary goals.'[10]

This aspiration is more easily met in theory than in practice. If 'local independent social housing' (meaning housing provided by local authorities or housing associations) were available for young people at a level commensurate with the need, either as an alternative or as 'move-on' housing, the Foyer movement would not have arisen. Every young person away from home, whether as a worker, a work-seeker or a student, is well acquainted with landlords whose motive for property-owning is that sub-standard, sometimes insanitary accommodation can be let to the young for the sake of the Housing Benefit payments they generate for the owners. Readers of the local press anywhere will be familiar with tragic stories of the accidental deaths of young people resulting from inadequately maintained heating appliances in privately rented rooms.

The Foyer, regardless of its own overhead responsibilities, must charge a rent, for high quality accommodation, that the individual resident can pay, both before and after getting work. This, in turn, is determined by the entitlement of any young person to Income Support, and consequently to Housing Benefit as well as a rebate on Council Tax from the local authority. These in turn can be altered by administrative orders from central government departments, and in relation to wages may become, as the Foyer Federation observes, 'a large disincentive to work'. But what happens when a Foyer resident becomes ineligible for residence, a situation most likely to occur with the 16 and 17 year-olds. One Foyer director in the YMCA sector told

the author of the Youthaid report that 'they would be accepted and funded through charitable donations'.[11] Another told me: 'Considering our aims, we would be ashamed to throw them out just on the matter of rent'.

It is easy to imagine the agonising discussions that would precede anyone's eviction from a Foyer because of unpaid rent. While government seeks to restrict the availability of social security benefits, employers seek to lower the wages for young entrants to the labour market. Organisations with a different frame of reference, outside these economic motivations, tread a difficult path, since they too are expected to present a balanced budget.

The Experience of Residents

9

9. THE EXPERIENCE OF RESIDENTS

A word, and a concept that often appears in the vocabulary of the young is *respect*. We are used to hearing it in a negative sense, like statements to the police: ‘He didn’t show me any respect, so I hit him’. In the atmosphere of the Foyer I heard it in a positive sense. I was told: ‘They treat you with respect’. One of the variants on this theme was the phrase ‘You know where you stand with them’.

The implication of comments like this is of course that other institutions with which the young come into contact do not display what young people perceive as respect, or do not behave consistently towards them. For, rightly or wrongly, many young people regard their contacts with the official world with suspicion and fear. The introduction of the Jobseeker’s Allowance in October 1996, intended to integrate and largely replace Unemployment Benefit and Income Support, and designed to weed out the people seen by government as ‘welfare scroungers’, exacerbates the climate of mutual hostility between claimants and the hapless members of benefit staff enforcing the rules.

Foyers have clearly stated conditions of residence. There are the usual house rules: no drugs; no illegal activity or offensive weapons; alcohol to be confined to personal rooms, not public spaces; no smoking in smoke-free areas, and so on. Rents must be paid. This means in practice that residents, whether employed or not, must make the appropriate claims to enable the Foyer to claim Housing Benefit. (One Foyer manager confided to me: ‘If people’s circumstances really excluded them from benefits, we wouldn’t turn them out. We would find a charitable source to balance our books. What would be the point of casting them adrift?’)

The important condition of residence is, of course, not the house rules or the rent, but the insistence that young people should, as a result of private one-to-one discussions with training, education and employment staff, draw up and adhere to an ‘Action Plan’ which is related to personal goals in life, as well as skills, educational achievements, housing aspirations and employment aspirations.

I was assured by both staff and residents that this personal support was *the* vital element in restoring self-confidence to people profoundly discouraged by their experience of the realities of the world of work.

No Foyer residents displayed to me any resentment of the demands made by training staff or training sessions. Some saw it as a matter of the hints and tips on self-presentation that might land them a job or a place on a college course. Foyer people themselves laid great emphasis on the 'soft skills' that don't win accreditation but in the fortuitous world of winning a particular job might be the deciding factor. They also stressed that the climate of a Foyer is set by the particular mix of residents, and the information and attitudes they share between them. One veteran of the movement put it this way:

> 'The mix of young people helps. Somebody gets accepted on a college course, and others say, "He's not that bright. If he could get it, I could do it too." People learn from each other more readily than they take advice from outsiders.'

As one resident expressed it to me: 'We're all in the same boat here', adding that the Foyer had been a place 'where they sort out your problems one by one'. Hers was the familiar story of having been obliged to leave home after endless rows, and had slept on the floor in various friends' rooms while seeking one for herself. She had borrowed the money for a deposit on a room that proved to be both unsuitable and unsafe, and had been referred to the Foyer when seeking help in recovering the deposit.

It was similarly accepted among residents I met that the anticipated maximum stay of two years in the Foyer was reasonable. People wanted a place of their own, and it has proved a positive advantage that the usual means of Foyer development has been the mechanism of housing associations. Many of these have been involved in permanent single-person or two-person housing, precisely to serve as 'move-on' accommodation for Foyer residents. Mobility is a characteristic of youth, and plenty of people in the Foyer movement have pointed to the discrepancy between governmental advocacy of job mobility and the view expressed by a government Minister at a Foyer conference (cited in Chapter 5) that 'the best place for most young people is the parental home until they can afford to meet their own housing costs.'

At an international level, the Foyer movement sees a multinational network as its aim[1], and it is part of the philosophy of the Foyer Federation that:

> 'If we are to respond to young people's desire for greater mobility, and to employers' need for a flexible workforce, then this element must be built into the Foyer programme. Foyers must be networked together throughout the UK and Europe. This will facilitate the safe movement of young people between areas in response to employment leads, training courses and for other individual reasons.'[2]

We are a long way from achieving this ideal, but with or without it, mobility is the most obvious characteristic of young adults. When I asked Foyer residents where they expected to be in a year's time, the usual reply was 'Wherever there's a job'. And Don Macdonald remarked that between the ages of 16 and 25 he had had 12 addresses and since that age, only two. My own experience and that of any reader will have been much the same. In the lives of the young the Foyer is one experience among many. In the lives of the fortunate it is an irrelevance. But my impression is that Foyers provide a helping hand just when it is needed.

This has a lot to do with the difference between the attitudes to the homeless and jobless young expressed by Ministers at party conferences, and those of people in daily contact with them. Thus Victor Adebowale of Centrepoint told the Foyer conference:

> 'I have yet to meet a young person who wants to lie around in bed all day, and doesn't want to work, and doesn't want security, and doesn't want a future. They are full of hope and full of ambition. They want work, and it is important that we stand up and say that at every opportunity. I don't think that we should continue to admit that there are young people out there who are basically a burden on the state. They are not a burden on the state, they are our future.'[3]

I had the same kind of affirmation from a very experienced Foyer manager, Paul Hulley. I had mentioned, in passing, Quentin Crisp's remark 'The young always have the same problem: how to rebel and conform at the same time.' Paul Hulley's response was this:

> 'I take as my starting-point the fact that the vast majority of young people, no matter how rebellious, no matter how absurd they may appear,

> inevitably both become responsible citizens, but also aspire to be responsible citizens. What young people mostly want is a job, and they will go to any lengths to get a job. They will take the most menial work, not because it has status, but because being employed has. Menial employment is better in the eyes of young people than being on some sort of scheme, no matter what the long-term benefits may or may not be. And I think that young people are wise to recognise that the vast majority of schemes are just "schemes" and not a lot else.'

Approaches like these explain why the characteristic comment I gathered from Foyer residents was, 'They treat you with respect'. There is, in fact, a lack of imaginative understanding in our approach to the young. The press, for example, likes stories of people rescued from sleeping in shop doorways or the drug subculture or prostitution, and slotted into work as computer programmers. Life is seldom so dramatic.

I went to the presentation of the first annual report of the Gateway project in Southwark in south London. The press were invited, as well as the representatives of government departments and big business, since the precarious finances of Foyers depend on creating a 'partnership' of public and private enterprise to keep afloat. Some of the young residents were there too, requested, no doubt, to mingle, in their sweatshirts, jeans and trainers, with the well-groomed men-in-suits.

The chairman proudly claimed: 'The initiative's mission to break the "no home, no job" downward spiral into which so many young people are drawn has been a resounding success, with more than 100 positive results for its 150 residents/trainees during the first year'. And of course we were told about the 100th successful trainee, 24 year-old Jason who had drifted through a range of dead-end jobs and non-jobs since leaving school, and had landed a job with London Underground as a station assistant. Obligingly he said: 'Gateway has really helped me put my life into perspective. I've found a permanent job – something that I want to do and enjoy doing. I'm settled now and I'm looking for a flat of my own.'

At this point in the recital of hard-won successes, the man sitting next to me, who turned out to be a newspaper correspondent, whispered, 'Well, if that's

all they could do for him, he'd be better off without it'. I had a sudden glimpse of the contempt that is felt not only for the fact that Jason's job, unlike most, is in one of the vital services that actually keeps the city functioning, but also for the fact that he is happy in it. Earlier generations of young people were able to conduct their own 'work experience' or 'job training' by flitting from one job to the next, until they landed in the one which really did suit them.

Another London Foyer remembers Derek. At 17 he was referred to the Foyer by the council's Homeless Persons Unit, having been sent to them from a local night shelter. Life had become impossible for him in the household of his father and grandmother. He joined a part-time NVQ electrical course at the local further education college, but was soon in trouble at the Foyer because of the boisterous behaviour of his guests, and never thought he was being treated fairly. The time came for the review of the Action Plan drawn up when he arrived, but by this time he had dropped out of his course, saying that it was boring.

People with literacy problems are very good at concealing them, but when Derek had to formulate written answers to the questions on the form, they were revealed. He had understood very little of the material on his course and had been unable to do the written work. It also emerged that he had an unpaid fine for shoplifting offences, and his real anxiety was that his grandmother should not be told. A new Action Plan was drawn up. He was to meet the training worker twice a week for general basic tuition and was to have a twice-weekly session with the local literacy and numeracy project, while the Foyer checked that the work was being done. 'His attitude to the Foyer changed and his motivation shot up by about 150%. He found himself a cleaning job, and he started paying off his fine. Then, after about three months, things began to slide.'

He was actually with a staff member at the Foyer when there was a phone call to ask if he lived there. 'Who is asking, and why?' asked the staff member, and the police explained that they were holding someone giving that name. It was this incident that told him about his friends, but, as the Foyer manager said, 'He had to learn so much, so quickly'. Derek spent 18

months at the Foyer, and caused a great deal of discussion at staff meetings about how much time to spend on him. The answer was: ‘We can do constructive work with him that other people can’t do,’ and, now that he has moved on to independent housing he is enquiring about picking up some GCSEs to fill the gaps in his education.

> ‘He won’t have an easy path as an adult, but in his time here he moved from seeing the staff as authority people, so that he should get away with as much as he could. But by actual personal contact with them, and by gaining from that, he changed to working with us, rather than against us.’

This young man was the subject of intense discussion at Foyer meetings. At the beginning of his stay he was a disruptive influence and perhaps a danger to other residents. Knowing that the peer group creates the atmosphere among the young, staff feared his effect on the positive attitudes they wanted to promote. On the other hand they blamed themselves for not diagnosing his real problems at the first interview. But they also resented the immense demands he made on their time, at the expense of the other 79 residents. By the time of his second Action Plan, they were trading on the fact that he *liked* living in the safe and clean atmosphere of the Foyer, and, as they explained to me, ‘made sure that he knew he was on a very short leash’.

If Foyers are measured by positive outcomes, Derek was a success. Vast sums of future public money have been saved by this particular rescue operation. The Foyer manager is hesitant to make this claim. ‘Who knows what will become of him?’ she asks. Most residents present less arduous problems. Their difficulties arise simply because the housing situation and the employment situation of the young have worsened for their particular generation. In their lives the Foyer is one brief episode among many. But for some residents it is a crucial turning-point.

Big Issues and DIY Foyers

10

10. BIG ISSUES AND DIY FOYERS

The Foyer movement stands out as a rare and imaginative attempt to alleviate the consequences of joblessness and homelessness among the young. So, with a quite different approach, is *The Big Issue.* Few readers in any British town or city can have failed to come across it. It is a magazine, launched in 1991 in London, inspired by *Street News* in New York, which by 1995 had become a weekly. It has developed seven regional editions around the country and is sold in Scotland and both parts of Ireland. Its original circulation of 30,000 copies in London has multiplied to about 350,000 around Britain.

Like the Foyer, the street newspaper idea had both the disadvantage that it was seen as a foreign import from a different culture which might not take root here, and the concomitant novelty value. A new idea might attract new support. Several charitable agencies rejected it as too risky for initial funding, and it was actually Gordon Roddick of The Body Shop who enabled *The Big Issue* to take to the streets.

It ignores the retail distribution system, selling only through trained vendors on the street, observing a code of conduct and receiving a large part of the cover price (at present 45p out of the 80p charged to purchasers). Its founding editor-in-chief, John Bird, insists: '*The Big Issue* is a commercial business, not a charity'[1], but once the venture began, has had the support of charitable and company sponsors for a variety of services for vendors, both in finding housing in association with Centrepoint and other housing charities, as well as with specialist bodies like the Westminster Drug Project, and in seeking to generate employment opportunities and initiatives.

The blurred distinction between a business enterprise and a charitable trust, made it inevitable that in November 1995 The Big Issue Foundation had to be inaugurated to sponsor and develop both its housing resettlement and employment training services. It seeks out opportunities for ex-vendors to develop enterprises of their own, through an initiative called 'Making It'. The journal itself is an employment generator, carrying a staff of 80 people, all doubtless gathering valuable experience. But when in 1996, a former editor of *The Observer* was brought in as publisher, it was reported that

'Andrew Jaspan moves swiftly around *The Big Issue*'s vast offices flicking his hands at the many empty spaces. The magazine's new managing director sees cost savings in every void.'[2]

There are ironies here, as the ideology of 'downsizing' encounters that of job-creation. They talk different languages. But there is no doubt that *The Big Issue* venture, exactly like the Foyer movement, has succeeded in restoring the self-confidence of people cast aside by the employment market. The concept spread rapidly throughout Europe, and in October 1995, with support from the European Commission, *The Big Issue* convened an international conference at which 55 journals from 15 countries were represented and which adopted a code or charter for street newspapers. This stresses that the common aim is:

> 'To strive to give a voice to people who find themselves in social isolation and help them to break out of the vicious circle of dependency by providing them with the self-respect that comes from selling a good quality product they are happy to sell and which is inherently attractive to the public.'[3]

John Bird is an automatic rebel against the notion that nothing can be done about the collapse of the job market. Interviewed on the magazine's fifth anniversary:

> 'Bird talked about a *Big Issue* building firm, which would employ the construction skills of vendors to build houses, schools, hospitals, prisons or anything else they could win contracts for. Is this plausible?'[4]

Plausible or not, building for themselves is one way in which homeless and jobless young people can, with a lot of help, radically and permanently change their situation and their life chances. A slight shift of emphasis could make a big issue out of the potentialities of self-build housing for the unemployed young.

The first such venture was inspired by a local magistrate in Bristol, Stella Clarke, who set up a steering group to help the Zenzele Self-Build Housing Association, of 12 unemployed, unskilled young people, aged around 22, to negotiate their way through a thicket of financial and legal barriers. A site was obtained from the local authority with a provisional loan from the

Housing Corporation. A very important *local* agreement was won from the Department of Social Security that members would work on their two-storey block of 12 flats while continuing to draw social security benefits. An individual mortgage for each member was provided by the Bristol and West Building Society and a general foreman was engaged to train the members and supervise the work. It took them 14 months to build their flats, longer than was expected, as some members got jobs and could only work in the evenings and at weekends. All the members eventually found work, usually as a result of the skills they had acquired.

Most of those builders, being young, moved on. They started families and needed bigger homes, or they took jobs elsewhere. And of course, they sold at a profit on the three and a half years of their lives they devoted to housing themselves. Within the housing world I was disconcerted to hear Zenzele criticised for this reason, arguing that the flats should have been for rent rather than for sale. It worried me that poor people should have to be the bearers of the social conscience of a nation, whereas owner-occupation and the benefits that accrue from it are taken for granted by the majority. Zenzele not only gave its members jobs, but set their feet firmly on the 'housing ladder'.[5]

It led to further initiatives in Bristol and elsewhere and in 1989 to the report *Building Young Lives*, commissioned by Charity Projects which also allocated funds to provide support for groups of young self-builders.[6] Meanwhile, the Walter Segal Self-Build Trust, formed to propagate the simple system of house construction evolved by the architect Walter Segal until his death in 1985, had demonstrated in a series of projects that the most disadvantaged of young people could dramatically change their situation by building for themselves. For example, the Fusions Jameen Housing Co-operative in South-East London consists of young, black, unemployed men and women, some of them single parents, who have changed their life chances by housing themselves. Their co-chairman, Tim Oshodi, explained:

> 'What we are doing is building up their confidence so they feel they can do things. We're building not only houses but people's belief in themselves. They know that once they have built their own homes, they can do anything.'[7]

Subsequently Charity Projects and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned a further study of 11 self-build projects for the young unemployed, up and down England, identifying the problems they faced. In this report, Danny Levine identified some of the innumerable problems involved in initiating this kind of project where the provision of housing has a social and educative dimension, not taken into account in normal housing finance. They parallel those of the combination of a housing and a training role in the Foyer movement. His summary conclusions included the following:

- Young, homeless single people can successfully self-build their own homes; the support costs are high and need to be available through standard funding systems, rather than from charitable funds, if this sector is to expand significantly.
- The process of development is time-consuming for the Housing Associations involved. A development allowance, similar to the Special Projects Promotional Allowance from the Housing Corporation, would encourage Associations to develop youth self-build schemes.
- Schemes need a clear statement of the roles and responsibilities of the various parties in self-build in order to function well: that requires housing professionals to use plain language, not jargon, and to explain systems clearly.
- Where support workers are involved with a group, those with a youth work or social work background are the most effective.
- Where there are no support workers each of the professionals involved must have a clear responsibility to inform and train the young self-builders, and there must be a system for developing life skills and access to support after the scheme is completed.
- If youth self-build is to develop, local authorities need to incorporate self-build into their strategies, urban/economic regeneration as well as housing.
- Most of the youth self-build groups in the study found the level of bureaucracy time-consuming and hard to grasp, and felt this was a factor

> in self-build being such a long process. Local Authorities, Housing Associations and the Housing Corporation could examine their systems to see how to reduce the level of bureaucracy and make their systems more accessible to young people. [8]

This formidable list of the necessary organisational changes before self-help solutions by the young homeless unemployed can become a normal procedure is the hard-won fruit of experience.

Like Foyer projects, self-build schemes depend upon a careful marshalling of a variety of sources of support, often the same bodies, like the Housing Corporation. The Youth Self-Build Association on North Tyneside for example (well known because its evolution was watched in Channel 4's *Raising the Roof* series) was the result of joint action by Barnardo's and the North British Housing Association. Other schemes broke down when their complex juggling with potential sources of support collapsed. Their failure had nothing to do with the capacity of unemployed young people to learn building skills and put in a day's work. Indeed, one unique venture in this field attributes its success to 'hard work and low pay' and to the fact that 'With no mainstream funding, or no single financier or central/local government money, we were in total control'.[9]

This is the Giroscope Housing Co-op in Hull, a city so depressed that the escalation of house prices in the 1980s passed it by. In 1985 a young unemployed man, Reg Salmon, borrowed enough in small loans from similarly situated friends, completely on trust, to pay the deposit for a mortgage on a small run-down house valued at about £7,000, which, together, they set about renovating, learning the art of building repairs from DIY handbooks. With that improved house as security, they got a bank loan to buy a second house, and rented rooms to other homeless people.

Then, with the help of Humberside Co-operative Development Agency, they set up a building co-operative, Giroscope Ltd, whose directors were all under 25 and unemployed. The aims of the co-operative are 'the purchase, renovation, modernisation and furnishing of houses in poor condition', and 'the renting out of these houses to unemployed people

and to other disadvantaged groups such as single parents and disabled people.'

This aim has kept them busy ever since, for when I first visited them in 1988, members of Giroscope explained to me that in their city, 47% of the housing stock belonged to the council, yet at least 3,500 families were officially described as homeless, while this minimal figure ignored people who were young, single and footloose, and all those teenagers obliged to leave home after a marriage breakdown or a family row, or because to stay in the parental home was, for one reason or another, intolerable. At that time the co-operative owned eight houses accommodating about 30 young, unemployed people and four children.

When I next met them in 1995 they were housing about 60 people, having acquired 19 formerly derelict buildings, including a crèche run by parents and a corner shop leased to another co-op, a joint housing project with Mind, and an alternative energy experimental house. Giroscope is firmly rooted in the co-operative ideology. The corner shop is run by the People's Trading Company, and explains:

> 'Today two longer-serving members of the co-operative are the trainers and we are slowly developing a training system for new workers. Sometimes we are fortunate in that a new worker will bring a skill with them when they join, but this is by no means a criterion for membership. The training we give is mainly "on site" with some back-up theory sessions.[6] Skill sharing is a vital part of our work and means that if someone leaves the co-op we are not left with work which no one can do. Between us we can now rewire, re-roof, install central heating, plaster, build window frames, bricklay, lay carpet, operate a computer, devise financial plans, counsel young people, lobby politicians and much more besides.
>
> 'We are members of a network of co-ops across the United Kingdom called Radical Routes, and part of our working in this group involves training. The network has a very wide skill base which enables us to hold training sessions open to anyone. Such topics dealt with at these events include setting up worker/housing co-ops, fundraising, alternative energy, co-operative decision making and much more.'[10]

Giroscope has moved in 10 years from its initial situation as ‘a bunch of folk, complete with their dreadlocks or shaven heads, who started pooling their giros to make eating cheaper, and felt that this mutual aid could extend further’, to becoming one of the bodies commended by the European Community’s PETRA Project which supports projects contributing to young people ‘s education and transition to adulthood. It rejects the spirit of individual entrepreneurialism and stresses the importance of what it calls ‘communal need, not greed’.

Interestingly, precisely the same point was made to me by advocates of the Foyer movement in France. Charles-Antoine Arnaud, the president of the UFJT federation, told me that in the context of an individualist culture, the Foyer might often be the first place where residents learned to develop reciprocal, rather than competitive relations with each other, and I have already cited the conviction of Bernard Faure of ALJI in Grenoble that since contemporary society has alienated the young at a huge social cost, the Foyer’s emphasis has to be on helping them to rediscover the habit of belonging to a community. and to become ‘part of the neighbourhood and of the city’.

When Tony Gibson was the guest speaker at Giroscope’s annual general meeting, the young member whose task was to present its progress report compared the cost of official housing policy with theirs.

He told Gibson:

> ‘Whilst I recognise the need for more hostel accommodation, surely more native and cost-efficient ways can be found. What we want to see is more co-operative housing in Hull: projects that allow young people to create and control their own housing ... Decent housing is a basic human right. There is so much potential in housing to change things, to get people off the street, but let’s put the same resources into projects that cure the disease rather than just treat the symptoms.’[11]

I list this range of intriguing activities: the street newspaper, the potentialities of self-build, and the experience of Giroscope, a moral fable for our time, not to suggest that they are alternatives to the Foyer approach. Their importance

is in their rarity. They are among the very few initiatives in contemporary Britain to recognise the impact of the collapse of employment for the young. The prevailing view, both in government departments and in public opinion, is that if young people can't find the jobs which were taken for granted by their parents, it is somehow not the result of devastating economic change, but the fault of the young themselves.

Problems Ahead

11

11. PROBLEMS AHEAD

In the summer of 1995 the 25-nation Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported on unemployment in many countries, noting that it 'creates high costs in terms of the waste of human resources and associated poverty and social distress', and warning that if it were 'allowed to continue on such a scale, social cohesion could become gradually undermined with inevitable negative consequences for economic performance'. It also drew attention to 'the fact that it is very unequally distributed: the less skilled, the less educated and young people all have a much higher risk of becoming unemployed'. And it recommended that 'an hour of individual counselling per month for each unemployed person is a reasonable target.'[1]

The undermining of social cohesion seen as a threat in the OECD report is, in the experience of ordinary citizens, whether in cities or small towns and villages, already with us. Punitive legislation and moral crusades all reflect the terrifying social cost of excluding a large section of young and active people both from the economy and from the possibility of housing themselves. How long, and at what a price, can they be shut out of society?

People in the Foyer movement in Britain, France, Germany and the other European nations would criticise the OECD document on several grounds. The first is the assumption that unemployment can be considered as a separate issue from homelessness, since in the daily lives of young people these two deprivations are inextricably linked. The second is the assumption that an hour of individual counselling per month for each unemployed person is 'a reasonable target'.

Their experience is that it takes a great deal more than that to develop in a demoralised young person those 'soft skills' that are not recognised as job training and do not qualify for subsidy as 'vocational'. My observation is that when someone leaves the Foyer without what is seen as a 'positive outcome' the staff blame themselves for not having spent enough time on that particular resident. They could also, of course, blame the changing demands of the job market. Many years ago Harriet Ward coined a useful aphorism to describe this problem: 'As the threshold of competence rises, the pool of inadequacy increases'. The young experience this every day.

It applies to 'life skills' too. John Drake, the director of the Norwich Foyer, with decades of experience of running YMCA hostels, remarked to me:

> 'It can be hellish for some of our residents for them to be offered a flat and to discover that it is the equivalent of solitary confinement because they haven't got the skills to live there. They don't know how to cook, they don't know how to budget, and soon the spiral of debt and loneliness causes them to end up seeking community dwelling back in a hostel. For them it is a step not back to ground level but almost to pit level because they feel they have given it their best and they can't cope with it, and therefore they feel less motivated to see independent living as a viable alternative, because they've screwed it up.'

This applies equally to the ability to hold down a job. I have already reminded readers that when they were young, they conducted their own 'work experience' by flitting from job to job until they landed in the one that really suited them and their talents or their level of competence. In those days this was considered a sign of the frivolity of youth. Today it is considered to be an attribute of a flexible labour force. But to be rejected is a bruising experience and as a confirmation of our own incompetence. Plenty of Foyer residents have been through this experience and seek a breathing-space for a better-equipped effort.

The Foyer movement in Britain has sprung into existence in a very few years through clever adaptation to sources of goodwill and funding. Apart from capital grants from charitable trusts and from industry, business and European funding and now the National Lottery, it has been heavily dependent upon revenue account funding from government money, through one or another of departments and spending agencies, as well as on initial secondment of staff from the Employment Service.

Government spending is short-term spending, and changes, which are usually cost-cutting exercises, are often introduced for one purpose while having unforeseen implications for other services. Since the Housing Corporation is the favoured channel for investment in housing, virtually all Foyers have been developed by housing associations (including the YMCA) and a good relationship has been developed with the Corporation, including

its special needs allowances. But the Corporation's overall budget is under continual review from the Treasury, and the Foyer movement will suffer from its curtailment.

Similarly, since the rents of residents depend on Housing Benefit, changes in the regulations and in local authorities' application of them may upset the budgets of Foyers. And since Foyers are a unique attempt to link housing with job training, their revenue accounts depend on both, they have themselves to educate their funders. As Don Macdonald puts it:

> 'Housing associations do not necessarily have expertise in job creation, training or employment, nor do youth agencies, while training and youth agencies know little about housing nor housing management with young people.'[2]

My fear is that just as the 1980s saw an endless series of short-term programmes with continually changing acronyms for reducing the statistics of youth unemployment, so Foyers have have been the favoured agencies in the early 1990s, entrusted with particular sources of revenue, but running the risk of being superseded in government favour in the late 1990s. This is why a great deal of effort has to be devoted to seeking funding from business and industry and charitable sources. Long-established bodies like the YMCA, with their existing networks of funding, and the bigger housing associations have taken care in Foyer promotion that the buildings they provide can be adapted to other uses.

Politicians of all parties have short-term commitments and are unwilling to commit themselves to proposals including greater public spending, except on policies to contain crime, but all of them ventilate proposals for some form of workfare, making social benefits dependent upon participation by the young workless in projected programmes of environmental or social care. The introduction of the Jobseeker's Allowance sets the machinery in motion for this. Any such programme, whether voluntary or compulsory, is dependent on high administrative costs, for which the budget must be contrived by squeezing government support somewhere else.

Workfare projects, whether voluntary or compulsory, do not have a happy

record of success. There is a history from the pre-war years of 'work camps' to relieve unemployment in Britain, Canada, the United States and Germany. Their historian, John Field, observes:

> 'significant sections of the political elites regarded the camps as a desirable solution to the problems of large-scale unemployment; but it was never possible to construct a coalition of popular support. Rather, the camps were roundly disliked by many of those who were expected to enter them; and this dislike, reinforced rather than weakened by popular attitudes ... turned into widespread alienation once the authorities were seen not to be delivering on the one remaining trade-off which could have justified the experience – a job at the end.'[3]

The modern equivalent of the work-camps of the 1930s is a variety of 'schemes', and I cited in Chapter 9 the conclusion of one Foyer manager that 'young people are wise to recognise that the vast majority of schemes are just "schemes" and not a lot else'. Workfare proposals, whether based on volunteering or on compulsion, bear no relationship to the proposal from a quarter of a century ago for a Community Industry. The vital differences, which I made clear in Chapter 2, included the two crucial elements of an appropriate wage and a career structure.

That proposal anticipated the idea of a 'social economy' which is much discussed elsewhere in the European Community in the light of the determination of the market economy to eliminate jobs in the name of global competitiveness. Its advocates claim that the appropriate response to the objection that we cannot afford a social economy is the claim that we cannot afford to do without it, since the collapse of social cohesion costs a great deal more.

In comparison with the scale of both youth unemployment and youth homelessness the Foyer movement is a very limited exercise. My fear is that its modest budget, instead of increasing, will be reduced in favour of investment in workfare, which, whatever form it takes, is unlikely to be administered on the basis of friendly and personal help given to willing applicants.

On the basis of official statistics alone, and ignoring those who have simply dropped out of sight and have no official existence, it is claimed that between 200,000 and 300,000 young people in Great Britain experienced homelessness in 1995, while between 650,000 and 700,000 people below the age of 25 were unemployed.[4] Of these, not many have so far found their way to Foyers, but the movement is only a few years old and is still far from the basic geographical coverage it set out to win in 1992. This depends on local initiatives and local effort. It was John Drake again, from the Norwich Foyer, who reminded me:

> 'If Foyers are totally dependent on government funding, they will always be vulnerable. I'm hoping that Foyers will be so appreciated by the local community that every town will realise that something is missing if it hasn't got one. A Foyer, like a theatre or a decent hospital, is part of the urban fabric, to be cherished just because it is there to meet needs. If any community has the will to look after its young, then the government is merely a pump-primer. What the pioneer Foyers have succeeded in doing is raising the issue, raising the potential resourcing, and raising the awareness of everyone.'

There is little I can add to his assessment of the significance of this new movement that a few determined and inventive people have launched in a climate singularly lacking in social innovation. The next steps depend on the degree to which citizens feel concerned in the dilemmas faced by the young.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: VISION AND MISSION OF THE FOYER FEDERATION FOR YOUTH

VISION

A national network of Foyers providing safe and affordable accommodation with access to training, education and employment opportunities from which young people are empowered to become socially and economically active citizens.

MISSION

The Foyer Federation for Youth aims to:

1. **PROMOTE** the development of a national network of foyers.
2. **PROVIDE** advisory services and information for developers, managers or supporters of foyers, with regional networking and mutual support.
3. **FACILITATE** the exchange of models of good practice in the development and management of foyers.
4. **INFLUENCE** central and local government and the private and voluntary sectors on the need for foyers as part of a national strategy for young people and their responsibility to provide adequate funding.
5. **RESEARCH** new and better means of providing support for all foyer residents.
6. **ENCOURAGE** innovation and diversity among foyers in order to respond effectively to the needs of young people.
7. **ESTABLISH** a quality framework for the accommodation, guidance, support and training available for foyer residents.
8. **CHAMPION** fair and equal access and opportunities for young people including those with special needs.
9. **EVALUATE** the performance of foyers especially in terms of the outcomes for young people.
10. **DEVELOP** constructive links with European partners.

Foyer Federation for Youth
91 Brick Lane, London E1 6QL
Tel: 0171 377 9789
Fax: 0171 377 5847

APPENDIX 2: FOYERS OPERATING IN THE UK, FEBRUARY 1997

Basingstoke YMCA Foyer
YMCA, Eastrop Way,
Basingstoke RG21 4QO
Tel: 01256 479696, fax: 01256 842588

Bath Foyer Sanctuary Housing Association
Dominion Road, Twerton, Bath BA2 1BZ
Tel: 01225 464264, fax: 01225 461819

Berkhamsted Foyer
137-139 High Street,
Berkhamsted HP4 3HH
Tel: 01442 354344, fax: 01442 354344

Birchwood YMCA Foyer
46 Hamnett Court, Ainscough Road,
Birchwood WA3 7PL
Tel: 01925 821996, fax: 01925 811342

Braintree Foyer
St Michaels Road, Braintree CM7 7EX
Tel: 01376 343433, fax: 01376 340044

Bridge Close Foyer
Bridge Close, off Kingsdown Close,
London W10 6TW
Tel: 0181 450 1122, fax: 0181 452 2285

Bridport Foyer
West Rivers House, West Allington,
Bridport DT6 5BW
Tel: 01308 427775

Bruce House Skills Development Centre
Kemble Street, London WC2
Tel: 0171 379 5371, fax: 0171 379 5370

Camberwell Foyer
90 Denmark Hill, London SE5 8RX
Tel: 0171 501 9661, fax: 0171 501 9497

Coops Foyer
Chequer Street, Wigan WN1 1HN
Tel: 01942 770100

Craven YMCA Foyer
Pinder House, Skipton BD23 2NS
Tel: 01756 796542

Cumbernauld Area Foyer
Cumbernauld YMCA-YWCA, Kildrum
Farm, Afton Road, Kildrum,
Cumbernauld G67 2DN
Tel: 01236 616068, fax: 01236 721382

Darlington YMCA Foyer
Middleton Court, Middleton Street,
Darlington DL1 1SL
Tel: 01325 462452, fax: 01325 462452

Ealing YMCA Foyer
YMCA, 25 St Mary's Road,
London W5 5RE
Tel: 0181 579 6946, fax: 0181 579 1129

Focus E15 Foyer
49-51 The Broadway, Stratford,
London E15 4BQ
Tel: 0181 227 1000, fax: 0181 222 1347

Gateway Project
66 Lancaster Street, London SE1 ORZ
Tel: 0171 928 7232 Fax: 0171 401 8548

Guildford YMCA Foyer
YMCA, Bridge Street, Guildford GU1 4SB
Tel: 01483 32555, fax: 01483 37161

Halton YMCA Foyer
Halton YMCA, Halton Lodge Avenue,
Runcorn WA7 5YQ
Tel: 01928 591680, fax: 01928 565462

High Wycombe YMCA Foyer
YMCA, Crest Road,
High Wycombe HP11 1UD
Tel: 01494 465700, fax: 01494 436954

Kirkcaldy Foyer
West Bridge Mill, Bridge Street,
Kirkcaldy KY1 1TE
Tel: 01592 644048

Luton Foyer
63 Inkerman Street, Luton LU1 1JD
Tel: 01582 401366, fax: 01582 482870

Market Rasen Foyer
The Grange, King Street,
Market Rasen LN8 3BB
Tel: 01673 842700, fax: 01673 842700

Newbury YMCA Foyer
Craven Dene, London Road,
Newbury RG14 2AY
Tel: 01635 552988, fax: 01635 552988

Norwich YMCA Foyer
YMCA, 48 St Giles Street,
Norwich NR2 1LB
Tel: 01603 630049, fax: 01603 768382

Nottingham Foyer
YMCA, 4 Shakespeare Street,
Nottingham NG1 4FG
Tel: 0115 924 2977, fax: 0115 924 2977

Paines Mill Foyer
Paines Mill, St Neots PE19 1HR
Tel: 01480 406316

Painswick Inn Foyer
Gloucester Street, Stroud GL5 1QG
Tel: 01453 759400, fax: 01453 759211

Portsmouth Foyer
22 Edinburgh Road, Portsmouth PO1 1DH
Tel: 01705 360001, fax: 01705 360005

Reading YMCA Foyer
YMCA, 34 Parkside Road,
Reading RG3 2DD
Tel: 01734 575746, fax: 01734 588684

Richmond YMCA Foyer
Market Place, Richmond DL10 2JJ
Tel: 01748 825752

Romford YMCA Foyer
YMCA, 29 Rush Green Road,
Romford, RM7 0PH
Tel: 01708 766211, fax: 01708 754211

Ryedale YMCA Foyer
The Sidings, Riverside View,
Norton YO17 0PR
Tel: 01653 691011

Salford Foyer
1 Lower Seedley Road, Salford M6 5WX
Tel: 0161 737 7778, fax: 0161 737 0507

Sedgemoor Foyer
YMCA, George Williams House, Friarn
Avenue, Bridgwater TA6 3RF
Tel: 01278 422511, fax: 01278 444223

Sleaford Foyer
81 Eastgate, Sleaford NG34 7EA
Tel: 01529 415318, fax: 01529 415394

Southend Foyer
Newlands, Ambleside Drive,
Southend-on-Sea SS1 2FY
Tel: 01702 301309, fax: 01702 301000

St Helens YMCA Foyer
YMCA, Central Court, North Road,
St Helens WA10 2TJ
Tel: 01744 454984, fax: 01744 29112

St Matthew's Foyer
1/3 Junction Road, Northampton NN2 7JQ
Tel: 01604 792214

Stamford Foyer
1 Barnack Road, Stamford PE9 29A
Tel: 01780 480520

Stoke on Trent YMCA Foyer
YMCA, Edinburgh House, Harding Road,
Hanley, Stoke on Trent
Tel: 01782 864500, fax: 01782 864530

Swale Foyer
Bridge Road, Sheerness ME12 1RH
Tel: 01795 580786

Watford YMCA Foyer
Charter House, Charter Place,
Watford WD1 2RT
Tel: 01923 233034, fax: 01923 226299

Wellington YMCA Foyer
Consort House, Victoria Avenue,
Wellington TF1 1NH
Tel: 01952 400401

West Kent YMCA Foyer
Ryder House, 1-23 Belgrave Road,
Tunbridge Wells TN1 2BO
Tel: 01892 518505, fax: 01892 514928

Weston Foyer
Sanctuary Housing Association, St Ives
Road, Weston-Super-Mare BS23 3XX
Tel: 01934 413587, fax: 01934 413634

Wimbledon YMCA Foyer
YMCA, 200 The Broadway,
London SW19 1RY
Tel: 0181 542 9055, fax: 0181 542 1086

Yeovil Trinity Foyer
Peter Street, Yeovil BA20 1PN
Tel: 01935 414479, fax: 01935 414480

APPENDIX 3: INTERNATIONAL LINKS

EUROPE

OEIL (Organisation Européenne des associations pour 1'insertion et le logement de la jeunesse)
12 avenue du Général de Gaulle, 94307 Vincennes Cedex
Tel: (33) 1 4174 8100, fax: (33) 1 4374 0429

DENMARK

SUF (Den Sociale Udviklingsfond)
Vester Allé 24/4, 8000 Aarhus
Tel: (45) 8619 280, fax: (45) 8619 9081

FRANCE

UPJT (Union nationale des foyers et service pour jeunes travailleurs)
12 avenue du Général de Gaulle, 94307 Vincennes Cedex
Tel: (33) 1 4174 810, fax: (33) 1 4374 0429

GERMANY

BAG JAW (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Jugendsozialarbeit)
Kennedyallee 105-107, 53175 Bonn
Tel: (49) 228 959 68, fax: (49) 228 959 6830

GREECE

KEMEDIN
Maizonos 48, 10438 Athens
Tel: (301) 520 0096, fax: (301) 362 4385

IRISH REPUBLIC

Focus Ireland
1 Lord Edward Court, Bride Court, Dublin 7
Tel: (353) 1475 1955, fax: (353) 1475 1972

ITALY

Associazione Quartieri Spagnoli
Via Tre Regine 35/B, 80132 Napoli
Tel: (39) 81 411 845, fax: (39) 81 412 597

POLAND

Otwarte Drzwi (Open Door)
ul. Targowa 59/1, 03 729 Warsaw, and PO Box 199, 03 987 Warsaw
Tel/Fax: (48) 22 618 8696

PORTUGAL

CEBI
Quinta de Sta. Maria, Est. Nacional 10, 2615 Alverca
Tel: (351) 1958 1556, fax: (351) 1957 2353

SPAIN

Pro Empleo
Navas de Tolosa 3/3, 28031 Madrid
Tel: (34) 1532 6181, fax: (34) 1521 6668

UNITED KINGDOM

FFY (Foyer Federation for Youth)
91 Brick Lane, London E1 6QN
Tel: (44) 171 377 9789,
fax: (44) 171 377 5847

GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION

REPORT

COLIN WARD

HAVENS AND SPRINGBOARDS

THE FOYER MOVEMENT IN CONTEXT

For many decades the parental generation told the young, ‘You just don’t realise how lucky you are’. But today many young people can retort to their elders, ‘You just don’t realise how lucky you were’. In terms of access to employment, housing and social benefits, their situation is far more hazardous and discouraging than that of their parents.

In the early 1990s a handful of people concerned with the crisis of homelessness and joblessness among the young started the Foyer movement in Britain. They were influenced by the experience of their equivalents in France and Germany who had developed what the French call *Foyers de Jeunes Travailleurs* as ‘an integrated approach to meeting the needs of young people during their transition from dependence to independence by linking affordable accommodation to training and employment’.

By 1997 there were 46 Foyers operating in the UK with a further 32 due to open during the year and a similar number being planned. This report looks first at the historical context, and at the situation in Germany and France, and then describes the growth and experience of the Foyer movement in Britain.

Front cover photograph by John Crane.

ISBN 0-903319-82-9

£8.00