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‘The voluntary organisation forms ... a unique feature of the British way of life’: A voluntary youth organisation’s response to the birth of the statutory youth service

With Ken Loach’s ‘The Spirit of ‘45’ opening on Friday March 15th, it’s good to know I’m not alone in revisiting the significance of the birth of the welfare state.

Introduction

In the light of the ongoing apparent demise of state sponsored youth work, it is timely to revisit its birth over sixty years ago. At the time, voluntary organisations responded somewhat equivocally and not without suspicion to the arrival of the youth service and to the increasing power wielded by the statutory sector. Although the growth in funding for work with young people was welcomed, the involvement of the state was greeted with suspicion and fear and youth work rapidly became contested territory. For many decades volunteers and philanthropists had responded to social issues and created organisations. Some of these had begun to receive state support particularly during the period preceding the Second World War and national organisations had brought greater coherence. For youth workers,

Circular 1486: In the Service of Youth (1939)

Circular 1516 The Challenge of Youth (1940)

1944 Education Act

shifted responsibility for the allocation of funding to LEAs. In other words, the locus of power was moved. This paper will look at the period immediately after the Second World War through the prism provided by a case study of the situation in the West Riding of Yorkshire where there were particularly acute rivalries and antagonistic jostling for space.

Minute books and annual reports forming part of the archives of Leeds Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs (LAGC&MC) and its successor bodies together with records of the regional Yorkshire Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs (YAGC&MC) and subsequently the West Riding¹ Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs (WRAGC&MC) are used to show the attitudes of the long-established voluntary sector to what was perceived to be a threat to their existence.

Before looking at the period before and during the Second World War, I'm going to start in autumn 1947 when things came to a head. In the West Riding of Yorkshire, the Education Authority had established a County Service of Youth. It declined to fund either the WRAGC&MC or the LAGC&MC. The WRAGC&MC minutes of 20th September 1947 include information about the rapidity with which the L.E.A. rolled out its new County Service of Youth. The West Riding Association in particular had been wrong-footed and left in defensive mode as it saw its well-established activities taken over by a body whose resources vastly exceeded anything to which it had ever had access. Six Area Youth Officers had been appointed and were developing training courses and

¹ The West Riding of Yorkshire stretched from Sedbergh and Settle in the north to Sheffield and Doncaster in the south. Included Barnsley and Rotherham. Thus it extended far beyond the current metropolitan county of West Yorkshire.

also visiting and supporting clubs. These were tasks which hitherto had been within the purview of the WRAGC&MC. The Association had usually held an annual festival and inter-club competitions but by 1947 the County Service had already begun to develop these too. The Association commented, the County Service was 'fulfilling these functions more rapidly than ... anticipated' (WRAG&MC ??). There were apparently few tasks left for the Association to undertake and the committee began to seek out the tiny fragments of work which remained such as 'weekend gatherings about Xmas time where a jolly time could be had', holiday houses and 'facilities for travel'. In comparison with other counties, the situation in the West Riding was seen as particularly acute and those present at the September meeting agreed to write to the National Association urging amalgamation with the NABC.

So how did youth work in the West Riding reach the point where a County Councillor and General Secretary were disagreeing over the future (or otherwise) of voluntary youth provision?

The Build-Up

Until the 1920s, youth work was largely the preserve of volunteers. It was financed by fund raising, which took a range of forms. The minutes and annual reports of the Leeds Association of Girls' Clubs suggest a preoccupation with competition rules rather than financial matters. The records don't suggest any particular interest in 'the industrial question' (girls' working conditions, for example). Whilst the organisation was never wealthy, it was able to survive on a combination of donations

from local philanthropists and occasional public appeals for specific items. There was an increasing number of educated young middle class women looking for outlets for their talents and many engaged in philanthropic activities. These included Kate Middleton's forbears (who were active in the Unitarian church).

From the 1930s, government grants were channelled through national bodies such as the National Association of Girls' Clubs (NAGC) and the statutory influence started to grow. Initially, funds from the NAGC were welcomed. From its inauguration in March 1935, the King George V Jubilee Trust also provided funding. Its aims included 'to advance the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of the younger generation, and especially of young persons who are aged 14 and upwards' (Catholic Herald 13.3.36).

The Jubilee Trust Fund supported the creation of the Yorkshire Association of Girls' Clubs. Whilst individual towns and cities had Associations, there was no coherence and the NCGC sought a regional tier via which they could contact local clubs. The Leeds Association co-operated in the development of the regional organisation and largely continued its work as before. The Yorkshire Association operated as a clearing house for grant applications, which it forwarded, in order of merit, to the NCGC.

1939 (before the war began) a report commissioned by King George's Jubilee Trust reported on the needs of school leavers [see Bernard Davies purple history p16]

Circular 1486: In the Service of Youth (1939)

Circular 1516 The Challenge of Youth (1940)

In 1939 Circular 1486:

- Improve yps' physical and mental condition;
- Prepare yp for military and civilian 'service'
- Offer yp 'disciplined recreational opportunities' (Bradford p133)

The West Riding created its County Youth Committee in February 1940.

In 1941, the Yorkshire Association disaggregated and the West Riding Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs was born. Wartime travel difficulties, the black-out, children and young people's evacuation, the billeting of soldiers all helped to make the administration of a single organisation for a county stretching from Middlesbrough to Sheffield and Hull to Sedbergh impossible. By this time, clubs' monies came from a combination of fund raising (holding dances, for example) and grants. Even on its own, the West Riding stretched from Sedbergh, which is now in Cumbria, in the north-west to Sheffield. As well as Sheffield, it included Doncaster, Rotherham, Barnsley, Bradford, Dewsbury, Wakefield, Halifax, Huddersfield, Keighley, Skipton, Settle and, of course, a vast number of other towns and villages.

A West Riding Education Authority report described the situation during the war when

In common with the Youth Service throughout the country, the war years saw in the Riding a rapid expansion designed primarily to deal with problems peculiar to war conditions. The black-out, conditions

of work and general moral dangers were good enough reasons for coping with as many young people as possible and whilst efforts were made to give them something constructive to do, the main concern was to keep them away from harmful influences. [...] The emphasis was ... on quantity rather than quality. Grants were made to clubs without any detailed investigation into the work they were doing' (West Riding Education Authority 1948).

The Association meanwhile worked to maintain standards in its affiliated clubs.

The Purpose and Content of the Youth Service (1945)

From 1945-6 central government started to direct funds to local authorities and the youth service was developed. However,

The West Riding Education Authority ... declined to grant-aid the work of the Association. Formerly the Ministry of Education made grants available to aid the work of Voluntary Youth Organisations, but it is now their policy that such grants shall be the responsibility of Local Education Authorities, and many Authorities make substantial grants. Although the policy of the Ministry is partnership between the Statutory Local Authorities and Voluntary Organisations in the Service of Youth, the West Riding Education Authority considers that this Service can be carried out by its own machinery and its own staff alone so far as clubs are concerned, and is not prepared to grant aid the administrative expenses of a voluntary body, such as ours. (WRAG&MC 1947c)

The impact on long-standing voluntary organisations was profound. Local authorities were in a position of allocating the funds and identified their own priorities. In some areas local authorities built good relationships with existing voluntary organisations but in the West Riding this was not the case and a more difficult situation emerged. These local difficulties appear to have originated in Cllr Walter Hyman, Chairman of the Education Authority's who had his own vision and carried through with tenacity. His vision did not include the voluntary sector, except as a marginal group of volunteers making no demands on state finance. Obituaries nowadays often tend towards hagiography. I'm not sure whether this was the case in 1967. Walter Hyman was described as 'quite reckless in his disregard of the way of peace and compromise' with 'a contempt of stupidity and pretence' (Yorkshire Post 1967).

In April 1945 WRAGC&MC learned that the West Riding County Youth Committee had refused their grant application. Minutes record that 'the National Association wished to know the reason for this, and to take up the matter with the Ministry of Education' (WRAGC&MC 1945a).

Probably presuming that it would be possible to reach an accommodation, the National Association made a grant themselves towards salary and expenses. Two months later, the association was advised by the L.E.A. that club leaders' salaries could be paid through grant aid but that their organiser's salary could not be funded. (WRAGC&MC 1945b).

LAGC&MC was facing similar difficulties in securing funding from the West Riding Education Authority and its constituent LEAs. Accordingly the two associations met to consider future joint policy bearing in mind the difficulty they were facing in securing grant aid from local authorities and bearing in mind the reduction in finance to the NAGC&MC from the Ministry (WRAGC&MC 1945b).

Accordingly in November 1945, representatives of both associations and Sheffield Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs met with L.E.A. youth officers from six areas and major youth clubs across the West Riding to discuss issues including how the statutory and voluntary organisations should work together 'for best results' among other matters. Miss Harford came from the NAGC&MC. She gave an overview of the initiatives being taken by National H.Q. including 'their realisation of the need for research work'. She spoke of 'art in the club' and also international contacts as well as 'holiday and camping arrangements'. She added, 'An enquiry has already been made on what the adolescent is doing and wants to do'. (WRAGC&MC 1945c) At the national level, the constitution had been amended to make it 'fit with the set-up on the Statutory side'. She described the 'evolution' of arrangements where voluntary organisations 'could relieve the L.E.A. of certain work and they in turn give material assistance'. Clearly aware of the background to the meeting, she described the situation in the West Riding as 'very peculiar' due in part to its 'many strong County Boroughs'. (WRAGC&MC 1945c)

Miss Harford posed a series of questions to the meeting including 'How could the Statutory and Voluntary Organisations work together for best

results?', whether there was a need for the NAGC&MC and also whether there was a need for an Association for the County Boroughs which, unlike Leeds, had no association of their own alongside the WRAGC&MC. The minutes record, 'There was a full discussion ... and finally it was resolved [to form] a small committee'.

Despite the organisational and financial crisis, the WRAGC&MC continued to affiliate and indeed to disaffiliate youth clubs. Shepley YC, for example, was disaffiliated in November 1945 because 'the Committee were not satisfied that the Club fulfilled the standards and conditions of affiliation' (WRAGC&MC 1945d).

The following year (1946), some clubs were deciding whether to remain members of the Association or move to the L.E.A.. Bramhope Youth Club's Leader felt that the L.E.A. provided more 'material benefits' but the Association's Field Secretary 'enlightened him as to the benefits of affiliation... and left him to think over the matter'. (WRAGC&MC 1946a)

The Spring Festival was held at Bradford Girls' Grammar School and over 400 clubs from across the West Riding were represented. The 'idea behind the Festival which was non-competitive, was to try and stimulate the clubs to try new activities, and to create a friendly inter-club spirit'. The programme included music (violin and piano playing and singing), public speaking, and physical recreation from boxing to national dancing in costume. There was an exhibition of arts and crafts. (WRAGC&MC 1946a)

Later in 1946, the Executive Committee heard a report from The Mixed Clubs Members and Leaders Conferences and learned that Members Committees 'should have more say in Programs [sic], the function of Leaders being to provide new ideas and to carry out the program desired by the Members'. Members wanted training in 'program planning' and teaching so they could take craft classes. (WRAGC&MC 1946b) This suggests the sophisticated level of members' participation in their voluntary clubs' programmes.

During 1946 the matter of finance occurred less frequently in the minutes but in September the WRAGC&MC learned that its application towards office and administration costs had been rejected by the West Riding. The letter from Mr Clegg was accepted as the final word for 1946-7 but the 'long and arduous fight' would be taken up again the following year. (WRAGC&MC 1946b)

In early 1947 it was agreed to defer applying for grant aid to L.E.A.s until the YABC application had been considered by the West Riding. (WRAGC&MC 1947a) The meeting considered how Members Councils should be funded and agreed to treat them 'almost' as sub-committees. Half their expenses would be paid. It was felt that 'such expenditure would carry weight with L.E.A.s in consideration of grant aid'. (WRAGC&MC 1947a)

The ongoing culture of mutual suspicion is shown in an account from March 1947 where the WRAG&MC came into direct territorial conflict with the local Youth Officer and Director of Education. During 1947 the

West Riding was re-organising its Youth Service and requiring all their youth clubs to re-register. This included uniformed groups. Registered groups were required to meet certain standards including having 'an **adult** management committee' (West Riding 1948). The WRAG&MC Secretary reported on Huddersfield Service of Youth Clubs, where

'The Organising Secretary had, as instructed, discussed the position of the Huddersfield Service of youth Clubs with the Youth Officer and Director of Education. He was informed that Lockwood Youth Centre had been improperly affiliated by its Leader, without the approval of the Management Committee; the Education Committee is the Management Committee of the Civic Youth Clubs; the Youth Committee is an Advisory body only, constituted before the Ministry Circular, and with some additions made since to bring it more in line with the Circular. Both officers expressed the view that the Association had little to offer to the Civic Youth Clubs. The secretary pointed out the desirability of co-operation and the advantages of affiliation. The officers observed that the Education Committee provides training courses and advisory service. They have no Members' Councils, and are not enamoured of these. They have no comment to make if we suggest affiliation to the Clubs other than the Civic, and the Youth Officer furnished a list of these. The question of affiliation of Civic Youth Clubs has not been considered by the Education Committee'. (WRAGC&MC 1947b)

This account is interesting as it shows the different value bases emerging. The clash can be seen as illustrative of the gradual emergence of a new difficulty in reaching a modus vivendi within the sector in the West Riding.

The Annual Report (March 1947) outlined the Association's strength of feeling about the importance of Members' Councils:

The important part which Members' Councils play in the work of the Association has been recognised by the decision of the Executive Committee that fifty per cent of their approved expenses shall in future be paid by the Association. The Members' Councils consist of two representatives from each club, and they consider a wide variety of subjects... they gain valuable experience in Committee work which will prove very useful in later life, and they can represent the views of their club, and by social activities they help generally to cement the life of the individual clubs into the life of the Association.

Association staff invested time and resources in supporting and nurturing Members' Councils. The fact that the Youth Officer and Education Officer were 'not enamoured' of young people's direct involvement in running clubs presages the future when members have little input in their own provision and workers are tasked with the necessity of fostering participation. Associations had long supported the idea of members' direct involvement: early girls' work pioneers had regarded the matter as significant.

The L.E.A.s were establishing 'Junior Youth Councils' and the WRAGC&MC secretary had looked at whether they overlapped with members' councils. He ascertained from the County Council Youth Officer that 'Junior Youth Councils were mostly rather defunct at

present, and their resuscitation will not be tackled yet'. (WRAGC&MC 1947b)

Perhaps it is worth noting that Association minutes suggest that the regional members' councils were not necessarily the thriving bodies suggested to the outside world. It was politic to build up their significance where they had potential to be a trump card in negotiations with the County Council. During early 1947 Wakefield, Bradford, Barnsley and Harrogate councils had met with varying success due to bad weather (the winter of 1946-7 remains a bye-word for bad weather). (WRAGC&MC 1947 March 15) Two years later the Organising Secretary reported, 'There are now two councils functioning in the West Riding: Harrogate and District which is the best of these and reasonably well attended, Bradford and Area, which needs a considerable amount of "nursing" and help. I suggest that the West Riding needs two more... one in Skipton and one in Wakefield, where I understand there was one in the past but it is now absolutely dead'. (Sinnamon ND p4)

Minutes of the joint meeting of the two girls' and mixed clubs associations' executive committees on October 4th record that Mrs G. Graham [the Chairman of the WRAGC&MC] 'observed that Voluntary Organisations are fighting for their life in the West Riding ... She thought we must look for things that are not done by the L.E.A. and make them our function'. (WRAGC&MC 1947 ???) She recommended amalgamation of the two associations. The meeting was chaired by Miss V. Grenfell, Vice Chairman of the national executive who also advocated

amalgamation and who predicted a reduction in Ministry of Education grants.

Later in October 1947, Mrs Graham met with County Councillor Walter Hyman, Chairman of the West Riding Education Authority, the man whose decisions had led to the Association's loss of funding. She appears to have been motivated by recent discussions concerning the need to explore the things not undertaken by the L.E.A.. Mrs Graham sought the meeting of her own volition to discuss how 'his Youth Scheme', as she termed it in rather disparaging terms, fitted with the WRAG&MC. She circulated notes of the meeting, which appears to have been somewhat combative. Whether the account was based on contemporaneous notes taken by herself or an aide or whether she wrote her own account immediately post facto is not known but either way, it seems to demonstrate diametrically opposed, somewhat hostile, positions. Cllr Hyman represented the new state funded service which formed part of the new welfare state whilst Mrs Graham was metaphorically clinging to the remains of the previous system. As his obituary states, Hyman 'made enemies and created obstacles to his own purpose' (Yorkshire Post 1967).

Cllr Hyman assumed Mrs Graham wished to discuss grants but she emphasised that she wanted to discuss policy. He responded that, provided the Association did not ask for grants, they could exist 'just as much or as little as we liked, just as long as we had voluntary workers who wanted to spend their time on such things' (Graham, 1947). Mrs Graham's style of writing suggests the tone in which the discussion took

place. Was Cllr Hyman surprised that any sane individual would want to do unpaid work with young people?

Mrs Graham observed that Cllr Hyman believed the days of voluntary clubs had ended 'because a really progressive LEA should have taken all their work over'. Hence he was not concerned over the continued existence of voluntary youth clubs provided they did not ask for any funds and could survive through the involvement of voluntary workers.

Moving her focus, Mrs Graham turned to the advantages of the Association being affiliated to the NAGC, which provided a national perspective. Her account notes,

This he pooh-poohed at first and grumbled because the National Association draws a big grant direct from the Ministry of Education. He also objected very strongly to the waste of time, money, and energy caused by such national organisations as the Young Farmers Clubs (he has resigned from their National Executive or Council).

She expanded on her theme by talking about training:

I pointed out that many of his personnel were N.A.B.C. trained. He agreed that if we thought out any kind of training that was not being provided already and for which there was a demand he would be interested and if we wanted money we should ask for it and it would receive every consideration.

Apparently County Councillor Hyman was 'quite impressed' by the members' councils, which were a feature of clubs affiliated to the WRAG&MC. His own workers' attempts at encouraging members' participation had not met with success. The Association would only

affiliate clubs which had councils and provided active quite-sustained support in their creation so that clubs could meet the requirement.

Together with holidays (the West Riding Association and the Leeds Association, had a long history of organising residential both in the UK and mainland Europe) the idea of members' councils was the only aspect of work with young people, which impressed Cllr Hyman. He did not see the role of the national organisation immediately but 'consented to give some thought to' the advantages which 'a County cannot offer simply because it is not a National Body'.

[I think we're seeing a Yorkshireman for whom the West Riding County Council was of more significance than any 'national body'... I'm also mindful of Winifred Holtby's 'South Riding', published 1936. The obituary says he favoured provincial government for Yorkshire.]

Mrs Graham then turned her attention to the idea that 'the proper place for a Youth Club is as part of a Community Centre'. This particular angle isn't recorded as having been discussed during any of the executive committees' debates. She said she believed that youth centres needed to have 'parent bodies' just as 'the real unit of society is the family not a collection of orphans' (Graham 1947). Hence, until sufficient community centres had been constructed, churches and chapels would have to suffice. Cllr Hyman disagreed on the grounds that religious bodies saw their work with young people as essentially missionary or evangelical work and they sought only to recruit members.

Mrs Graham concluded her notes by observing that the Association should stop attempting to get funding for administration but should seek a grant for supporting members' councils; 'I am bound to say that I cannot see why an authority which proposes to administer a comprehensive scheme itself should be expected to subsidise another body to do the same work'. (Graham, 1947) In meeting Hyman, did she believe she might establish a good working relationship between the Association and the County Council only to be scuppered by Cllr Hyman's conviction that the days of voluntary clubs largely were over and the Council was the appropriate body to be organising work with young people?

It is almost certain that, as Cllr Hyman had been in post for ten years, Mrs Graham already either knew him in person or by repute. There is no known account of Cllr Hyman's perspective on the meeting but he possibly regarded the period where the Ministry of Education funded voluntary organisations to work with young people was a period of transition from youth work's early days where no workers were paid and the modern era where youth work was an aspect of the welfare state's cradle to grave provision.

Although Mrs Graham stated that she wished to discuss 'policy' rather than funding, she does not mention referring to the 1944 Education Act or Circulars 1486 and 1516. Rather she selected the aspects of the Association's work, which she felt were not being appropriately funded or valued. She might also have raised the question of the underpinning values but her record does not indicate that she chose to do so. The

question of whether all paid work with young people should be within the state's aegis was central. Whilst many local authorities chose to provide voluntary organisations with funding comparable to that which they had received hitherto from the Board of Education via the NAGC&MC, the West Riding made a different choice. Although it could be surmised that the personality of Cllr Hyman was a factor, the public confusion emanating from the dual associations may have contributed. (See, for example, ^^^^ - in minutes book)

By 1947, County Councillor Hyman had been chairing the Education Committee for ten years. Lynn Cook describes him as, 'A powerful and sometimes controversial figure', and adds, 'he was a dominant force on the many committees he chaired'. (Cook 2000, p89). Control in the West Riding moved between Labour and the Conservatives with regularity but the Education Committee's vision remained consistent as the dominant party held the chairmanship and opposition the deputy.

Cook (2000, p90) says that 'Hyman was driven by personal as well as philanthropic motives and his refusal to compromise did not always encourage friendship. However, he has been described as having a genuine passion for education, a vigorous intellect, a readiness for unlimited burdens and the tenacity to ensure his ideas were accomplished.'

Hyman and Clegg disagreed strongly with the 1944 Education Act's idea of selection at 11 years of age (and allocation into a grammar, modern or technical school) and developed plans for fully comprehensive schools

for the West Riding. However the detailed scheme failed, according to Cook, to include,

Methods of securing provision for leisure time occupations under Section 41 of the Act, or to the Section 53 requirement for the inclusion of 'adequate facilities for recreation and social and physical training'. Apart from the hostility recorded in the preface to selection, there is no mention, in the Development Plan, of how the LEA might promote the 'spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community'. (Cook, 2000 p93).

As noted, 6 youth officers had been appointed but the association's minutes do not mention 'adequate facilities'.

For Mrs Graham, the Association's work was paramount. For County Councillor Hyman, the Association's work is likely to have been an essentially middle-class concern of marginal interest. For him, the Association brought together girls' and mixed clubs which were largely set up by, and housed by, churches and chapels. As noted, he was suspicious about their underlying motives.

According to the Leeds Association's Annual Report 1947-8 'The times do not grow easier for voluntary organisations any more than for the country as a whole'. The report also notes that the West Riding and Leeds Associations had met to discuss amalgamation but found the idea 'impracticable' in the short term. (WRAGC&MC 1948). Whilst the Association faced great financial difficulties, in 1947 its member clubs worked together to raise funds and bought a sofa and easy chairs to give

to Princess Elizabeth and Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten as a wedding present.

Dated June 1948, (eight months after her meeting with Cllr Hyman) Mrs Graham wrote to advise the NAGC&MC that the WRAGC&MC had called an Extraordinary General Meeting with a view to dissolving the Association. She gives a typically vivid picture of the situation: 'for so long we in the West Riding have been struggling against veiled and active opposition from the LEA and our opposite numbers Yorkshire Association of Boys' Clubs' and also feels unsupported by the NAGC&MC who have 'failed to appreciate the position'. (Graham, 1948)

Later in 1948, the West Riding Education Authority produced its 'Scheme of Further Education, The Service of Youth, Community Centres and Village Halls'. Over halfway through, squeezed in at the end of a page, is the following point, 'The Authority do not, however, approve grants-in-aid towards local administration costs of national Boys' and Girls' Club organisations. Having themselves set up an adequate organisation they do not wish to encourage duplication of effort' (West Riding 1948).

Although by September the West Riding Association was effectively bankrupt, the Leeds Association and West Riding Association did not amalgamate until early 1950. The need to join together was clear but the two organisations differed more than might be anticipated in terms of expectations and outlook. Minutes record ongoing bickering over staffing and priorities. As the 1950-1 Annual Report stated, the amalgamation, 'long sought by both Associations on economy grounds

[was] delayed through what at one time appeared to be the irreconcilable needs and demands of each Association'. Once effected, 'the advantages ... have far outweighed [the] disadvantages'.

(WRAGC&MC 1951)

Despite the amalgamation and resultant reduction in overheads in 1951 WRAG&MC reported on an ongoing financial struggle. Power had shifted away from Labour for the period 1949-52 but the West Riding still declined to provide direct grants. This left voluntary organisations to continue to 'rely on the goodwill and generosity of individuals'. Financial struggles notwithstanding, the Association's annual report 1950-1 shows determination:

Certainly it is that without such help the voluntary organisation which provides for its members a valuable training ground in self-help and service and which forms such a unique feature of the British way of life, would either die or would have its field so severely restricted as to render it impotent. By their contribution, whether 5/- or £50, our subscribers are not only helping our day to day work, but they are also ensuring that a State Youth Service of the pattern followed once in Germany will not come to pass in this country. (WRYGC&MC 1951)

The report looked back over the decade since the publication of Circular 1486, which 'revolutionised' youth work. The increased provision through Local Education Authorities was 'necessary and is welcomed' but the continued existence of voluntary organisations was identified as a vital buffer in ensuring that youth work would not be swallowed into a system of state indoctrination. The report's sense of injustice is palpable

as it continues, 'The fact that Local Authorities have accepted this extra responsibility has unfortunately led to a belief by some that the voluntary organisation has outlived its usefulness. Nothing can be further from the truth.' With scarcely veiled criticism of the West Riding, the report continued:

So long as our concern is with the welfare of the individual club member and not with simplifying the administration of the youth service, so long as we can see the value in small clubs – which might be inefficient economically but efficient from an educational standpoint – so long as we view the teaching of skills and the development of aptitudes as being secondary to the job of showing people how to work, play and live together, then the voluntary organisation has a vital part to play. (WRYGC&MC 1951)

Valuing 'association' above focus on individual development is a contest still being played out in youth work sixty years later. In slightly different tone, the report continued

In affirming our beliefs we wish in no way to detract from the excellent work that the statutory youth service for young people is achieving. Both statutory and voluntary organisations have a part to play and it is obviously to the benefit of both if co-operation and not competition prevails. It is, therefore, pleasing to be able to report that with the majority of Authorities in our area our relationship has been an increasingly happy one throughout the past year. (WRYGC&MC 1951)

Conclusion

At a time of nostalgia for the days of the statutory Youth Service, it is interesting to find its birth met with hostility and suspicion from some of those involved in work with young people. The apparent carelessness with which young people's participation through members' councils and their resultant club ownership was overlooked by local authorities is remarkable. Local authority youth clubs have never established a similar level of the expectation of participation.

Hyman and Clegg's vision for a West Riding where the LEA provided a comprehensive Service of Youth, replacing the vast majority of voluntary clubs, is interesting. Was it born of an idealistic vision of the comprehensive potential and responsibility of the Welfare State taking on the 5 giants: Squalor, Want, Disease, Ignorance, and Idleness? Was it ideological determinism? Was it pig-headed Yorkshire grit? It was a couple of years before the Association regained some of its optimism. In 1953 the annual report's cover stated, 'a year of decision' (WRAGC&MC 1953) and in 1954 the cover carried the message, 'a year of encouragement' (WRAGC&MC 1954).

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