

ABSTRACT SERIES 1


**Adult Education
MISCELLANY**

Community Action

**INDIAN ADULT EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION**

INTRODUCTION

About two years ago, the Indian Adult Education Association started on a new but fruitful venture to provide busy administrators and hard-worked social education workers with information and new ideas in summarised form. This venture, though started on a modest scale, has developed now into a regular Abstract Service. The service has been very popular and a good deal of enquiries had been received about various information and ideas included in these Abstracts. Because of their popularity the Association thought that these abstracts should be made available to a much larger audience than it had been possible for us to provide. Therefore, we are bringing out various abstracts under a particular subject in a pamphlet. The present volume contains abstracts issued during the course of two years on **Community Action**. It is our hope that it will be of some use to the field workers.



CITIZENS WORK FOR A SHELTERED WORKSHOP FOR THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED

Binghamton county in New York was faced with the problem of having many individuals who were physically and mentally rotting away due to their physical disability.

How to make these disabled individuals useful to themselves, their family and the society was a problem that made a few enlightened citizens of the county reflect.

After several meetings of these civic minded men and women of the community, an experiment at running a sheltered workshop for the disabled, was undertaken.

They collected \$ 300 as a starting fund for the workshop. Later these citizens contacted the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club of the area which sponsored a fund-raising drive and collected \$ 100,000. Through persistent effort, a local industry offered a contract to the workshop, which resulted in making the workshop self supporting. This workshop gives treatment and employment to 214 disabled individuals—disabled, due to amputations, arthritis, blindness, epilepsy, polio, arrested cases of T.B. heart disease, etc. At this workshop these persons are taught to do things for themselves, eventually they are prepared for work in open workshops. The workshop also runs a Rehabilitation department for correctional treatments of its employees.

The people of Binghamton have shown what can happen when citizens tackle a problem together, on their own.

—*The People Act,*
Pennsylvania University.

COMMUNITY EFFORT AT STARTING ART MUSEUM ON WHEELS

In October 1953, Virginia (U.S.A.) had its first Museum on Wheels. The citizens and officials of Virginia, realising

the educational value of the museum of visual arts, conceived the idea of opening a mobile museum which would reach people in their own communities.

Each local community in Virginia had to do the foot-work to make this dream of an artmobile a reality. The Director and Asstt. Director spoke to different groups and organisations explaining what an Artmobile would mean to communities far removed from big cities. The idea captured the imagination of the women's organisations, Youth Clubs, Adult Education Centres and various other voluntary groups functioning in Virginia and they entered into money raising activities—such as organising rummage sales, auctioning, lucky dips, dramatic shows, sale of arts and crafts, concerts, balls, fetes, carnivals etc. All these activities served as fine publicity for the Artmobile. Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs undertook to raise 10,000 dollars to meet the operational cost for one year.

Starting of this Gallery on Wheels, was an excellent example of community effort which did not end with raising the money. Each local community had to co-operate to plan the visit of the Artmobile and to fix up hours when the Artmobile could be visited by school children, womens organisations and the general public. Since the exhibit did not have sufficient staff, the local community had to find volunteers to help set up the trailer, arrange queues, furnish guides and hostesses etc.

Virginia thus made a good beginning of involving the community in providing service for the community.

—*New Dominion Series No. 146, Extension Division,
University of Virginia.*

COMMUNITY PLANS FOR ITS OWN EDUCATION

The Smithfield community in Georgia, U.S.A. consists of 50 farm families. Their children go to the same school. Although they belong to different churches they do not make any distinction in service which they enjoy in common and cooperatively, so that they have learned the joy of working and thinking together. As part of this process they planned a college in the country—they met together and took decisions about the syllabus, made a selection of speakers for their lectures, fixed the time of the course, and did everything to their liking.

A seventy year old member suggested the idea that he would like to graduate from a college just as some of the children and grand children did and wanted to start a college. But what kind of a college ?

They planned a course on the subjects they wanted to study together. They chose home planning, remodelling and interior decoration, health, elementary science, family relations, speech, music appreciation and the place of the church in the country. It was decided also that the course would be of thirteen weeks duration.

Just as the group had chosen subjects and speakers, the group decided also as to who should be given a diploma. The decision was that anyone who had not been absent without good cause deserved a certificate. There were 28 who attended regularly and they were awarded certificates stating that so and so had completed a locally planned course of study in Community Living, sponsored jointly by Mountain View-Garrett's Chapel Community Improvement Club and West Georgia College.

The graduates of the college as they preferred to call themselves, were proud of their certificates. They said that the course "made life richer", one graduate said—"We are better citizens." Another said "We trust each other better."

Another outcome of the course was that the idea spread. Other neighbouring communities asked the co-operation of West Georgia College in setting up colleges of their own on the same model as Smithfield.

College professors who helped were as enthusiastic as the members of the class. In some instances professors travelled more than seventy miles over rough unattended roads to come to the community even though they did not belong there. They claimed that they never did a more rewarding piece of work. Everyone concerned look forward to doing it again.

—*New Dominion, Series No. 118, Extension Division,
University of Virginia.*

CULTURAL MISSION PROGRAMME OF MEXICO

The Mexican Experiment of Cultural Missions has caught the imagination of educators in many countries.

The objectives of these Missions are economic rehabilitation and cultural and social advancement of rural population. These Missions have been described as "*Schools without Walls*", whose boundaries are marked out communities of a district and its inhabitants. The training sites are the fields and shops and homes (all places in which human problems exist) preferably among the most needy. Education is imparted free of cost. Documents of proficiency are not required of trainees, as the purpose of the work is not to create professionals or expert workers, but to create citizens capable of improving conditions of life at home and in society.

Some activities of Missions :

The Missions give the peasants practical instructions in agricultural methods, train women in nursing, child care and management of family resources and introduce home industries such as beekeeping, preservation of fruits, meats and vegetables; and making of dairy products. The missions exercise an important influence on civic life and recreation. Through recreation such as organised games, music, dancing, theatrical performances, debates, films, and radio programmes, they strive to modify the apathetic nature of the people and wean them from alcoholism and other vicious forms of entertainment. The Missions also give instructions in health and sanitation, support literacy campaigns, improve schools and libraries and promote public work projects such as building roads, bridges, corn grinding mills, drainage system, etc. and the local people supply labour and funds for the construction.

Types of Missions :

On the basis of the area or medium in which they operate, there are four types of cultural missions; Rural, Special Urban, Motorized, and Cinematographic. The *Rural* and *Special missions* each has a staff of eight to ten persons, including generally a chief, a doctor, a nurse and a midwife, an agronomist, or practical farmer, a home economics leader, a leader of recreational activities, a teacher of carpentry and a teacher of building construction. Each of these teachers develops and supervises the work in his field under the general supervision of the chief and in accordance with a general plan of work.

The *Motorized mission* has a staff of 3 persons, a truck equipped with a library, a gramophone, a motion picture

projector and a power plant. These missions travel through specific zones to aid in the development of national campaigns of public interest. The motorized units have been very successful in winning public support for national campaigns, before the technical units arrive.

The *Cinematographic missions* work in isolated centres that are not accessible by public or private transportation. Their methods of work and programme are similar to those of motorized missions.

The general objective of these Cultural missions is to stimulate the communities to improve their economic, cultural and social conditions.

Shortcomings of this Programme :

In spite of the contributions of these Cultural Missions, there are some short-comings in the present form of organization and administration of these missions.

1. Staff who man the Missions are not trained in methods and techniques of rural education or in skills. Salaries of teachers are low and living conditions in rural areas difficult. There is no institution in Mexico that trains Missioners—they are selected haphazardly. There is an over-emphasis on action and under-emphasis on theory. And action is often useless without proper theoretical background and training.

2. The time available to the missions to fulfil the objectives is inadequate. The Missions do not spend sufficient time in any one place to establish their programme on a permanent basis. The policy is for extensive rather than intensive work.

3. The rural people are not culturally prepared to receive the guidance of the missioners because of language barrier. Spanish is not known in the areas inhabited by the Indians and the Missioners do not speak the local language. If the missioners know the language of the people, the objectives of the missions could be better carried out.

4. Many missions do not have a full staff and lack the services of specialists. Sometimes, some missions have specialists who are not in a position to function, for example, there are carpenters in regions where wood is not available.

5. In 1947, these missions were re-organised and the number of missionaries assigned to each group was reduced. But this reorganisation was not accompanied by changes in plan of action and objective ; with the result, that the programme continued as before.

6. The missions, instead of working in close collaboration with other agencies working for cultural and material improvement of the rural areas, work alone. Most of the successful missionaries of the earlier period have left and those that remain are either incapable or frustrated.

In spite of all these weaknesses inherent in the present form of organisation and administration, it can be said, that these missions are doing a fine job, in spite of limited human and material resources.

—*The Mexico Cultural Mission.
Unesco Monograph on
Fundamental Education*

HELPING COMMUNITIES TO HELP THEMSELVES

To promote the vitalisation of local communities and enlist active participation of the people, through the organisation of small discussion groups, the New York State Citizens' Council was set up as a private, non-partisan, non-profit organisation in 1943.

The Council's goal of helping to build better communities has been achieved to some extent, by formation of local citizens' councils representing the Community in various towns and cities. These Councils take stock of community's resources and initiate planning and eventual action.

Successful actions by Citizens' Councils are reported in many communities throughout New York state. The Jamestown Area Community Council gives an example of local self study relating to many aspects of life in Jamestown in such fields as recreation, education, housing, health and welfare, religion etc. In Jamestown, members of the Community Council undertook a community-wide survey concerning school improvement programme and drafting a sanitary code for the city. As a result, school building improvement programme which had been turned

down for several years, was taken in hand. In addition, the housing committee studied federal laws covering low rental housing projects with a view to eliminate sub-standard housing. Its reports are being used in planning projected community action. This experience of the New York Community Council or Citizens' Council to vitalise the role of the individual citizen in community, can provide useful insight for Indians interested in the development of their own community services. The growing problems that elected representatives are faced with are increased demands and needs for services in education, health, recreation, physical planning and action by informed participating citizens. Creating an informed public ready to participate in solving their own community problems is an important function demanding the attention of everyone engaged in adult education.

—'Food for Thought'
Canadian Association for Adult Education
November, 1957.

MAKING GOOD COMMUNITIES BETTER.

In Carrolton, a small city in Georgia, U.S.A., the local college and the local Service Council jointly worked to make the community better.

For a number of years the City had owned a part of the land on which to build a lake, and a reservoir. The problem was to find enough money to start the project. The City Council decided to find a group of people to buy the land from the city. People were invited to buy "unseen" sites for summer homes on the imaginary shoreline of a lake. The buyers could not make a choice of location because the shape and bounds of the lake were not known. Buyers were assured of at least 100 water-front and final allocation of best lots by 'drawing a lot'. A day was set for the sale of lands and because of the support of the bankers, business men, city officials, civic clubs and the Carrol Service Council, all the 100 lots at 350 dollars each were sold within 2 hours.

That gave enough money to start the project. Work started the same day and within 3 months, 155-acre lake was filled. Since then, the enthusiastic citizens have planned a public park, a bathing beach, boathouses and

fishing piers. Total cost of this project came to \$ 77,500 ; 50 per cent more than what was realised from the sale of lake-front lots. Later, the back plots were also sold for \$ 25,000 and the deficit of \$17,000 was later assumed by the City Council in view of the total developments to the community. By 1950 the original land which was valued at \$ 350 a plot was estimated at \$ 1,500.

—Virginia University, Extension
Division, Bulletin No 120

PEOPLE WORK TO CONVERT SWAMPLAND FOR GROWING RICE

In the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast of West Africa, an experiment has been made to clear the swamp land to cultivate rice. In this region almost a million people depend on farming for their living. The area is large but the most fertile part is uninhabitable due to the tsetse fly which brings sleeping sickness to human beings and death to cattle. The farming methods are primitive, crops inadequate, and education barely 0.09 p. c.

In such a territory, the Community Development Officer along with his band of mass education assistants started working with Local Improvement Councils. The entire staff was committed to the belief that one must *plan with the people who must be helped to help themselves*. The local people and the village chiefs were first convinced of the necessity of converting swampland into rice growing areas. They offered voluntary labour to clear the land and build a dam so that rice fields could be irrigated throughout the year. The Agriculture Department supplied seeds and gave technical assistance. When the harvest was ready the land was divided into equal parts and each was harvested by those who had helped in clearing the swampland, and in building the dam.

The result of the experiment was clearing of 12 acres of swampland. Average yield per acre was 964 pounds of paddy rice. A few cultivators decided to store their crop for their use. Those who decided to sell their crop, were advised by the Community Development Organiser to sell their crop through the Bulk Purchasing Board, thereby eliminating the middleman. The dam which was

the result of a joint effort was also a centre of sociability for women.

—*Virginia University, Extension Division,
Bulletin No. 142*

THE PEOPLE ACT IN ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

Arlington, a pre-war rural area in suburban Washington D.C. suddenly had an influx of population following increased employment in Government services at Washington D.C. in the post-war period. More families moved into Arlington and the sudden increase in the number of children in the community presented a problem of schooling. This overtaxed the children, the teachers and the school. There were nearly 45 to 50 children in each class. Every possible available space—the passages, basement, veranda—was used up. Schools ran half day—3 hour sessions, with the same lot of teachers working for both the sessions and the teachers were leaving because of untold burden.

The parents of the community got together and went in deputation to the School Board which ignored them and said there were no money to open new schools or to employ extra teachers. According to Virginia law the School Board was not an elected body but a nominated one and not directly responsible to the people. The parents planned to work for an elected School Board. They formed themselves into an organization called Citizens Committee for School Improvement. The parents worked night and day for weeks together to enrol members to join the Committee and to collect 5000 signatures necessary to appeal for an elected School Board. This was not an easy job since the old residents of Arlington, whose children were out of school were in opposition as they knew that better schools and more teachers would result in increased taxation to meet the increased expenditure. In spite of this opposition, the Committee collected 5000 signatures and went into deputation to the legislators at Washington D.C. The legislators voted to allow referendum and let the people of Arlington county decide whether they wanted the School Board to be elected directly, or nominated as in the past.

Once again the members of the Committee were busy ringing door bells, convening public meetings, arranging radio talks in order to make people vote for an elected

School Board. They sought the help of school children in distributing handbills and leaflets. At last the voting day came and Arlington voted 2 to 1 for an elected School Board. Within a matter of months an elected School Board came into existence. This did not end the struggle—the members of the Board had to work for improving the school, by providing increased facilities, building new schools and employing additional staff to manage them. All this meant extra money and the School Board decided to issue new bonds. But this required votes of the people and with the support of the C. C. S. I. the bond issue for \$ 4,750,000 won. It meant higher taxes but it meant better schools for the children of Arlington.

By 1951, Arlington had new well ventilated and furnished schools with new staff, new equipment, new instruction methods and no more regimentation classes. The teachers were given a new salary scale. Arlington now has a real school programme. The credit for this goes to the parents of Arlington who formed themselves into the Citizens Committee for School Improvement.

—*The People Act,*
Pennsylvania State College.



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