

*THE ARKLETON TRUST*

***SERVOL AND ITS  
EDUCATION AND  
COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMMES IN TRINIDAD  
AND  
TOBAGO, WEST INDIES: AN  
OBSERVATION***

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Arkleton Fellow 1981-82*

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## PREFACE

We live in an age when 'self-help' is increasingly seen — even recommended — as an important, if not crucial, element in the process of human development amongst underprivileged groups — rural or urban. This report is an account of a successful approach to self-help amongst underprivileged groups in Trinidad and Tobago.

This approach — Servol — contains within it the contradiction of cruder notions of the self-help ideology. A framework *was* provided, and it was initially, provided by elements which were 'external' to the underprivileged groups. The evidently unplanned nature of this framework would have made it a difficult idea to sell to a conventional bureaucracy or planning agency although, arguably, the very flexibility of that unplanned and unstructured framework was itself crucial to the success of the development effort. The framework supported and encouraged self-help; experimentation was seen as part of the learning process; failures were as important as successes in providing learning experience. Servol may appear to defy concrete definition and rationalisation, because it does not fit established categories, yet it has rationality and concreteness in its results.

The story of Servol is interesting in its own right, and contains valuable insights advanced with humility and humanity. Yet there are general lessons, particularly about the need for, and nature of, supporting structures for local self-help efforts. This is an area where there is all too little experience and all too little imagination, yet it is one on which the idea, even vision, of self-help, grass-roots, development seems likely to stand or fall.

Angela Morrison R.S.J. has taken such lessons back to her own work with Aboriginal Communities in Australia; but the lessons are there for us all if we care to recognise them.

John Bryden,  
Programme Director.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Thank you"

- to those people who in one way or another were instrumental in my coming to Trinidad, and to those numerous others who assisted and directed me in my search for and discovery of Servol and what it was all about. Two ordinary words, nevertheless, they carry a wealth of meaning.
- to the Arkleton Trust for the granting of a Fellowship; to my Congregation for allowing me to accept it. Last but not least the Aboriginal people with whom I work, and who were instrumental in my coming here.
- to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny who allowed me to join and become part of their community during my stay in Trinidad and the Islands. Sr. Ruth Montrichard the Co-ordinator of the Beetham Life Centre allowed me 'dog' her footsteps, answered my questions patiently and shared her knowledge and experience of Servol with me. Patience is a top priority among the sisters — Sr. Reina was always prepared to assist me find the missing links during the report writing period.
- to Father Pantin, Director of Servol who made it so easy to come to Trinidad, apart from always being available to assist me to come to terms with the contradictions I saw in Servol.
- to each and every person with whom I came in contact both in and out of Servol, students especially. It was they who, in the process of making discoveries about themselves, assisted me make some about myself.
- to Isabella Faria who saw to it that the report was produced in a legible and correct fashion. I admire her persistency in sorting out the confused manuscript.

Some things will fade from memory, others will merge into the shadows, still others, the Spirit and Tradition of Servol will, I hope, become an integral part of both myself and my work. This could not have happened but for all of the above mentioned — once again I say "Thank You".

Angela Morrison R.S.J.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Fellowship from which the following report resulted was to study the methodology and processes used by a Community Development Organization called Servol in Trinidad, West Indies.

I had been working for fifteen years in the outback (rural areas) of Australia with Aboriginal communities. It was on being transferred to the Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute<sup>1</sup> that I became acquainted with Servol through its Director Fr. Pantin, who had been invited by the Institute to assist in a workshop for Aboriginal communities.

I witnessed at this workshop a mutual interest and rapport which sprang up spontaneously between Fr. Pantin and the Aborigines. It was as if he had touched off in them a spark of life that held meaning and worth. We were convinced that Servol had some basic principle from which it was operating. Servol was considered to be responding to a real need among a certain sector of the island's population. The latter, because of historical circumstances and environment, were finding it difficult to be accepted and integrated into the mainstream of their society. They were believed to have potential but no way of realising it.

I must admit that I set out with mental reservations about the necessity of submitting a written report, yet endeavoured to persuade myself that such a task could not be that formidable. So I came to Trinidad. But as has been truly said. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating!"

On arrival there, and having been introduced and initiated into Servol I found myself fascinated, intrigued and stimulated. The whole experience was quite mind-boggling. I continued to be fascinated by the people of so many different races and colours — from light tan to a very dark chocolate brown! I was intrigued by the total operations of Servol as they gradually unfolded, and the number of generations spanned from the very young to the very old. It was a stimulating experience to witness the so-called rejects, unteachables and untouchables respond to an environment and atmosphere in which they were able to shed their defence mechanisms, and become open and responsive to the caring and sharing that they experienced — many for the first

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1 Described in Appendix A: Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute.



time in a setting that embraced others beyond their natural environment.

In spite of this discovery, however, my apprehension about writing this report was not totally dispelled. I had steeled myself to the structuring of a factual and analytical dissertation about Servol 'the thing'. I discovered that Servol was about people. People are not things, therefore not readily defined. Servol is the story of people, a story that has not yet been completed and may well never be — and this simply because people continue to unfold as life and its challenges demand — and so Servol adjusts to the needs of the people it serves. Consequently it may change its 'hat' and take new directions but it will still be Servol as that is what it is all about.

This report consists of three parts:

Part I, will provide the framework which Servol has created over the past decade in response to the needs of the people it serves.

Part II, will flesh out the philosophy and psychology that underlie Servol's Life Giving Process.

Parts of the report are based on a series of statements, expressions and experiences of a wide cross section of both Servol members (past and present) and the general community mainly in the Port of Spain and Forres Park Area. No one of the above statements, expressions or experiences described Servol totally — it is a combination of all those things.

Part III, will provide some concluding remarks on Servol and its future relating to the Australian situation.

# I FRAMEWORK OF SERVOL

## The Setting

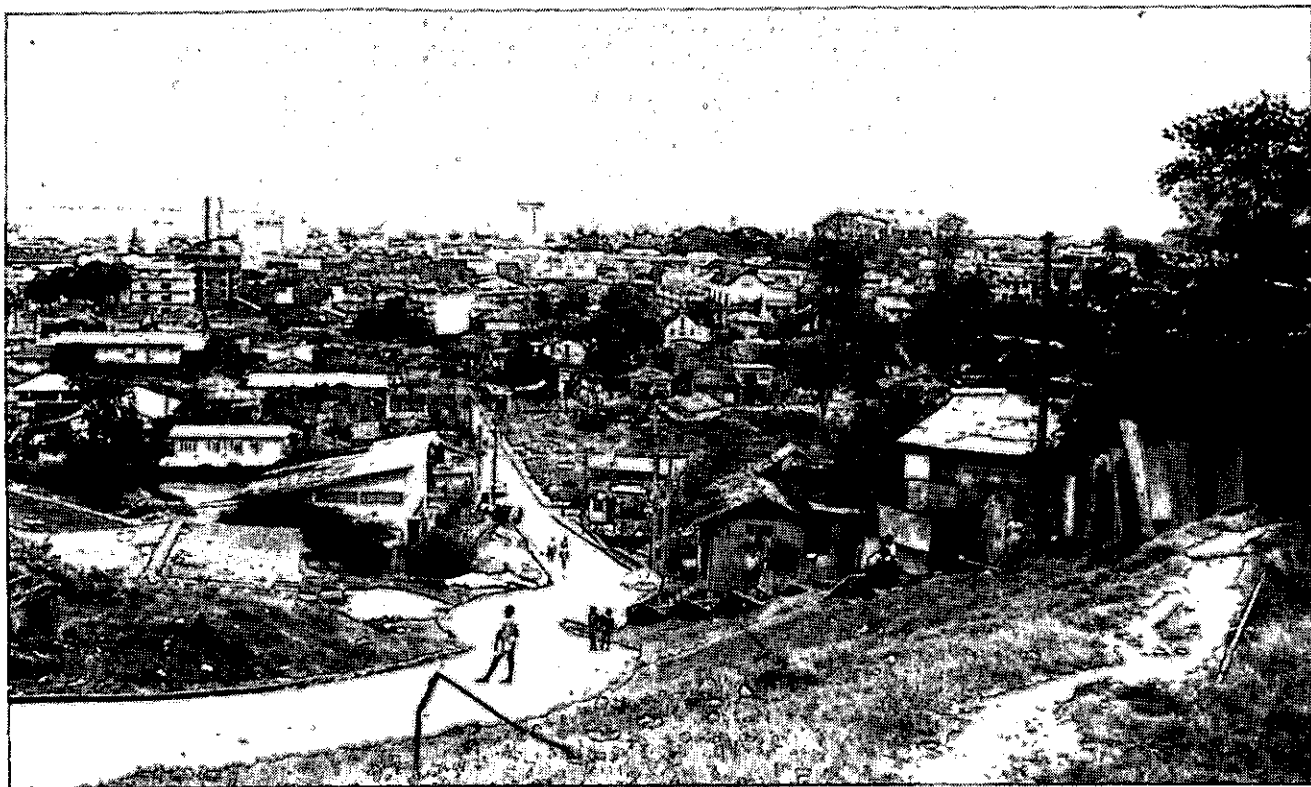
Trinidad and Tobago, the focus of this report, are two of a string of islands which constitute the West Indies or the Caribbean Islands stretching in an arc from Florida in North America and Yucaton in Central America to Venezuela in South America.

Like their neighbouring islands there is a history of conquest by European powers, colonization, slavery and the development of a multi-cultural society. The nineteenth century saw many changes — from slavery to emancipation and the indentured labour system — followed in the twentieth century by the development of a dualistic oil economy and political independence, against which previous history has had a somewhat mitigating effect.

The population of 1¼ million people is composed mainly of Africans (44%) (which has produced a unique and Trinidadian character) and East Indians (44%) with a smattering of people of European origin together with Syrian and Chinese immigrants. This mosaic of people and races while presenting a colourful, fascinating, vibrant and stimulating picture of life and culture tends towards a somewhat tenuous and diffuse type of community/society. This in turn inhibits efforts of peoples, groups, organizations and government to establish a solid platform/base (nationalism) that provides not only equity for all peoples but is a deterrent to both external and internal aggression.

The situation in Trinidad and Tobago at this moment is highly volatile — the former being the key figure in a rags to riches story with oil being the fairy godmother. The discovery of oil resulted in the island, formerly an agricultural country, foregoing its traditional means of livelihood for that of the oil industry and its accompanying benefits, consequently a complete change of life-style. This sudden boom precipitated a whole new social and economic situation in respect of an already floundering and somewhat disorganised family/community structure. People are still trying to adjust to a new pattern of existence, in which they themselves are the chief points of interest. Their whole life-style having previously centered around the "massa's needs",<sup>1</sup> they

1 Massa's needs refer to the colonial era when people were totally dependent on the whims of the estate owners.



"migrants continue to pour in and expand in the shanty towns and barrios."

are now intent upon seeking out an existence in the somewhat harsh, competitive and unknown world of affluence. This is a world of capitalism, industrialization and wealth, one which accentuates an already present and growing class structure, as well as the building up of the "ghetto" community concentrated in an area known as "behind the bridge". It was in these communities that Servol found itself intervening.

### **"Behind the Bridge"**

East of the city of Port of Spain one is suddenly confronted with the foothills of Laventille — a section of the city commonly called "behind the bridge". This name has arisen because of the wide cement series of bridges that separates the city from the Laventille area. Rarely are the walls of the bridge unoccupied — it is the central "liming"<sup>1</sup> place for the youth of Laventille which is perhaps symptomatic. Within the area is a large unemployed youthful population and a series of problems common to a crowded low income area.

The scene that confronts one fills one with amazement and wonder. Amazement at both the number and precarious position of wooden shanties, shacks and houses, occasionally interspersed with a small brick house set on the side of the hill. Wonder as to how these small frail buildings remain attached to the hillside. Over the years it has become recognised as "squatter slums". First emancipation and then the oil boom precipitated a mass migration to the city. Suffice it to say that this area encounters much of the social material and emotional deprivation characteristic of slums anywhere in the world — overcrowding, poverty, unemployment and generally bad conditions. These conditions inevitably breed frustration and despair, within the community itself, and anger and bitterness towards the Government and the more well to do members of society.

The gaining of Independence in 1962 did nothing to alleviate these conditions, on the contrary it aggravated and highlighted them. By 1970 the tension suddenly erupted by way of an uprising (the Revolution). It was a cry for recognition and help from a group of people who were struggling to maintain their humanness, dignity and pride while being locked into a set of conditions which were more due to historical circumstances

1 Liming means to hang around in groups talking, to pass the time.

than their own failures or inadequacies. It was in this atmosphere that Servol (as yet unborn and unnamed) had its beginning.

## History

Two men, a Catholic Priest and a well known West Indian cricketer decided to confront this frontier of discontent and offer their services to the people in whatever way they wanted. Their offers of service brought much derision, ridicule, hostility and scepticism born out of previous experiences of people coming and talking but not staying and certainly not acting.

Despite the difficulty of the adverse reaction shown them generally by the inhabitants of the area, they persisted with their "liming" on street corners. Eventually the contempt meted out to them was gradually replaced by some constructive dialogue through which came various requests. Each of these requests was honoured whether they were individual or otherwise. For example, if a basketball was asked for then a basketball it was. If it was wood for a house then wood it was. Jobs were requested, and jobs were found — over 200. Many of these were either vacated within a week or two of starting or were never started. There were no recriminations.

Meanwhile there was a perceptible change of attitude in the community. Instead of hostility and derision there was "silence", a "deep silence". This change merely served to accentuate the uncertainty and helplessness which was assailing the two men. They were on the point of giving up.

What they had not realised was that they themselves had engendered this wall of "silence". They had confounded and confused their "critics" so to speak. The community had become confused and wondering — these "fellas" seemed genuine.

The silence syndrome had set up two sets of reactions. The first emphasised the seemingly hopeless situation. The second served as an axis whereby the community was able to adjust to a new perspective without undue stress.

This period could claim to be the turning point in the life of Servol. It marked the beginning of a new relationship between the two men and the Laventille community — a relationship that extended beyond the bounds of person to person and encompassed a whole community and all that that entailed.

The former was no longer uncertain or discouraged — the latter were no longer distrustful, non-accepting or apathetic. They were ready to work to overcome at least some of their community problems with help.

There was such a surge of enthusiasm that it became necessary to have some place as a point of reference or referral centre to cope with the various demands and requests being made of this two man brigade. They were offered an old building in which they could set up an office. Furniture, desks and chairs were 'scrounged' and volunteers were recruited to man the office. As many as twenty people volunteered to spend some time at the centre. The majority of these volunteers were women of middle-class origin — a fact which caused some concern among their counterparts. Laventille had the reputation of being an unsafe place — a fear which was unfounded and based on speculation and imagination, stemming from the fact that this was a lower socio-economic area and consequently had a reputation of violence etc.

Ironically it was the presence of these women that quite imperceptibly and unknowingly broke down the "fear" syndrome that existed between the people "behind the bridge" and those on the other side. It was at this stage also that Servol derived its name (Service Volunteered For All).

### **What is Servol?**

Servol defies classification and categorization into any one specific area. It too, like the people of Trinidad, forms a mosaic of people, places and things — in which all the elements while fitting together expand and merge into new patterns. It is interesting to note that people who know or are involved in Servol refer to it as a community organization and a developmental programme but rarely, if ever, has it been officially titled as a Community Development Organization. That is usually the prerogative of visitors. It has the appearance of, and a thrust toward community development. That, however, was not its original aim nor will it ever need to be, as community development is a natural outcome of the process and methods used by Servol in carrying out its mission.

"Servol is Servol — that is what it is — nothing more — nothing less — volunteer service for all".

Servol is the result of one man having concern for his fellow-men, particularly that group who, through no fault of their own have, and still are being rejected by the greater part of society. He voluntarily put his concern into action, by trying to do something for this specific group of people. Trying has become part of Servol's tradition. It grew from a one, to a two, to a multi-numbered group, to a community — all giving of their assistance voluntarily. Each person volunteered their services to try to assist other people. Each step taken was a "try". Some of these steps succeeded and some failed. The failures were merely a pointer to a step in another direction. The result of all these tries, whether a success or failure, assisted in the development of a new concept for both community development and education.

Servol began its career by complying with the requests made to it in response to the question "how can we help?" The only stipulation made for the carrying out of these requests was that who ever made it must assist in some way in the realisation of that request. The requests were made by either an individual or a group, never the community as a whole. It is a phenomenon of low income and underdeveloped areas that while outsiders see these communities as a unified body, in reality it is not so. The communities are usually very fragmented, and divided into different factions. The people group themselves and usually only cooperate and communicate within that one group.

In the beginning, therefore, there was a variety of activities/projects going on in the one area but very little interaction or interest between the people involved in these various projects. There was a basketball court here, a small business project (small grocery) there and a bakery somewhere else. The link between all these projects were the Servol members who were well aware of this situation.

Efforts were made to counteract both the fragmented community situation and the inability of the youths to hold a job. A number of nursery schools were set up — and it was through these schools that the people began to integrate — other differences/jealousies were forgotten — the welfare of the child came first. At the same time a number of institutes were set up whereby the young school leavers could prepare themselves for the working life. These institutes provided vocational skills, such as plumbing, masonry, welding, and electrical installation. Over a period, training courses for girls were added, such as sewing,

catering, and nursing assistants. Added to this was a personal development programme which became an integral part of these training institutes.

These institutes were spread over both the Laventille and "down town" area of Port of Spain, wherever there was a room or space available. They were all situated in old abandoned buildings which, in most cases, were offered to Servol because of their uselessness for other purposes.

As the number of institutes increased it became very difficult to maintain proper supervision and administration. It was decided to integrate a number of these disciplines together under one roof, thus leading to the decision to build one large vocation centre. Today these same centres are termed "Life Centres".

On looking back over the beginnings one could realise/understand how Servol was termed a "strange animal". On hearing this expression for the first time one is inclined to write it off as Trinidadian emotionalism. It has been found, however, to be an authentic statement. Servol did not start off as an idea nor did it have any particular plan. It evolved from a question which caused/created numerous tentacles — these tentacles developed into something further — into life — a life that had been engendered by people. These people were those who had been deprived of society's basic needs — underprivileged through no fault of their own — from the very young to the very old. These people formed the core of the "strange animal". It was made up of all the different facets/components of life — that is what makes it tick. Take any of these away and there will be a break in the link of life — and the "strange animal" loses its vitality and vibrancy.

The "strange animal" of yesterday has now given way to the more sophisticated term of "Life Centre". It was perceived that the reality of life was actually presenting itself as being the main function of the centres. Servol had actually intervened in the lives of people, covering a number of different aspects or facets of life. Hence the term.

Today there are six such centres, some smaller, others bigger — each centre concentrating on, or catering for a specific group of people, e.g. vocational skills for the adolescent, a school for retarded or handicapped children. They do not see themselves as separate entities, but belonging to and working for the wider community. A common feature of all the centres is the day nursery for small children.



## **The Beetham Centre**

The first of these centres is situated amidst drab unpicturesque surroundings on the Beetham Highway — an extension of the “down town” area of Port of Spain. Although conspicuous by its height and size it otherwise merges comfortably with the environment. It emerges out of a series of small, flat-roofed, closely packed, boringly structured houses where the drainage and garbage systems are most inadequate. The structure and shape of the two storey building is very simple but functional — flat-roofed, rectangular in shape and featuring red open brickwork and wrought iron.

An additional building, also two storey and known as The Villa has been added to the back of and at the end of the first building. The Villa reflects a dimension that is absent in the first building — a more professional look. Both buildings were built by the students and instructors of Servol — the original building was the “guinea pig” — it was an experiment with raw material which had the will and vigour but lacked expertise. Expertise was acquired however, with practical experience and this was reflected in the Villa building.

The two buildings cater for a varied and diversified number of functions and activities (vocational and otherwise) including a number of the most basic disciplines integral to any community, such as health, medical and dental care, education of the youth, child and baby care.

This centre's predominant concern is the early adolescent, who for a number of reasons has been unable to cope with the traditional academically oriented school system. In order to allow and give them the opportunity to become viable members of society, Servol gives them the choice of a number of vocational skills or other disciplines. These include welding, plumbing, masonry, woodwork, auto-mechanics, electrical installation, nursery and child care, basic skills in nursing, dental and medical assistants.

Interspersed with the learning of the trade/vocational skills students are taught the elementary and basic necessities needed to cope with the working and business world — especially reading, writing and English. In addition they are given the opportunity of experiencing, absorbing, participating in and interweaving into their lives the most basic rudiments of living —



*... paramedical training and services*



*... skill training programme*

relationships. It is the ability to be able to cope with different types of relationships that will determine to a large extent a person's individual growth and integration into the mainstream of society.<sup>1</sup>

The Centre at this point of time appears to have agreed as to the direction it should take and is busily consolidating its position, thus enabling new focii and added skills as the working world of Trinidad moves into new industries and technology.

### **Forres Park Centre**

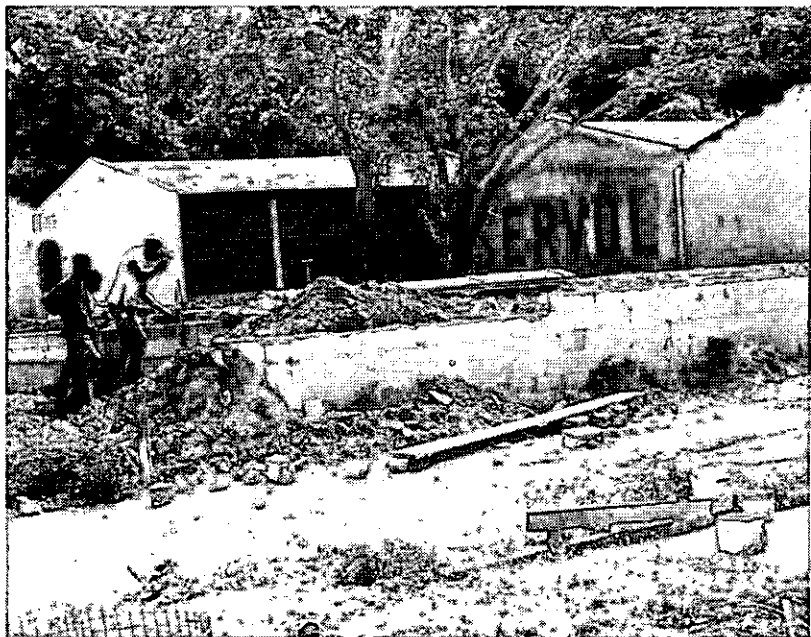
The Forres Park Centre in the midst of the cane growing country in the southern part of Trinidad was originally intended as a back-up for the advancement of agriculture in the area. Because of the gradual industrialization of the area as well as the stigma of hard labour and low remuneration from the cane growing industry, people are finding themselves jobless and penniless. Servol was approached by some concerned members of the area for assistance. After an initial period of "liming", general discussions and dialogue it was decided to set up nursery schools in several of the areas, together with classes for women in hand-craft and sewing, and for the youth, simple electrical wiring.

This was a step in drawing people together, and with their help an in depth survey and research programme was carried out. This brought the people in the community together with the Servol members to identify further needs and problems. The outcome of this was called Project Overlook.<sup>2</sup> The word "overlook" was used because the local people were and had been completely overlooked in the industrial development programme. On the other hand, Servol was prepared to "look over" the area with the local people and assist them in implementing functions and activities that would enable them to become masters of their future destiny in the light of the industrial development.

From the interaction, consultation and dialogue that ensued a request was made that opportunities be made available to those youths who for various reasons (as at the Beetham) were unable to cope with the conventional educational system. A centre was set up to enable the youths to learn a trade or skill that was

1 The content of the course is outlined in Appendix F.

2 See Appendix B



... an old mule pen



... into a modern Life Centre

relevant to the situation. It was hoped this would be the means of their gaining employment in the new projects being introduced as a result of the oil and steel-making industries nearby.

During this time an unoccupied house had been donated to Servol, and it was here that small beginnings were made. A mule pen had also been donated and it was around this mule pen that a whole complex is now emerging to cater for the needs of the community/ies nearby, as well as providing the means whereby these underprivileged people can free themselves from their destitution. Hopefully they will be able to face the challenge that now faces them in an increasingly technological age.

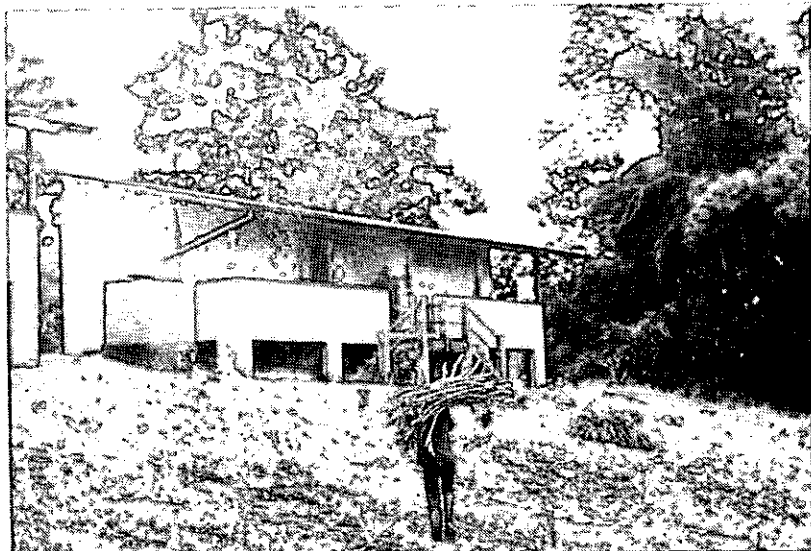
As in the Beetham Centre the practical work has been supplemented and balanced by classes in the theory of construction work as well as general talks on self and social awareness, discipline and motivation.

### **La Gloria Farm Project**

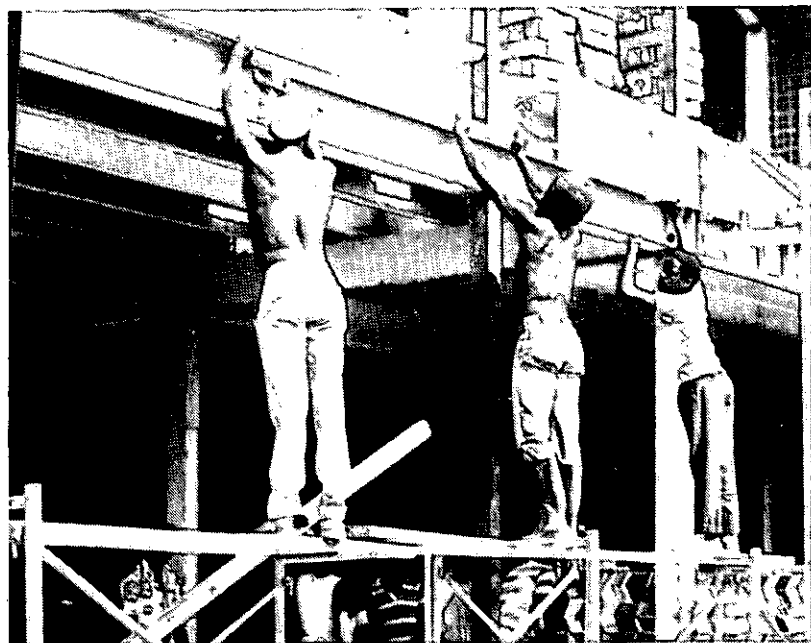
Aligned with the Forres Park Life Centre is the *La Gloria Farm Project* — a small farming project that has taken root despite the fact that much of the surrounding area is fast losing its rural character and becoming increasingly industrialized. It seems fairly certain that had it not been for the intervention of Servol this area would also be left to the mercy of the industrialist.

Servol discovered early in its career that to interest the individual person/youth in agriculture was a lost cause — money could be obtained by much easier means. The same does not apply however, when agricultural land is handed over to the families. Eighty acres of land was obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture on which began the project of “family farms”. Information and technical advice was obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as credit to purchase seed, fertiliser and insecticides, and low interest loans; a jeep could be borrowed from the pool as required. These were the supports given the farmers; they were encouraged to cultivate the land as they wanted. Today most of these farms are self-sufficient — but they still like Servol members to take an interest in what is happening, and consider themselves part of Servol.

The Forres Park Life Centre like the surrounding area is still very much in-embryo and unlike the Beetham is not yet ready for consolidating. This semi-agricultural/rural area is moving more



*... on the La Gloria Estate, the Child-to-Community project*



*... the productive work of its Centres*

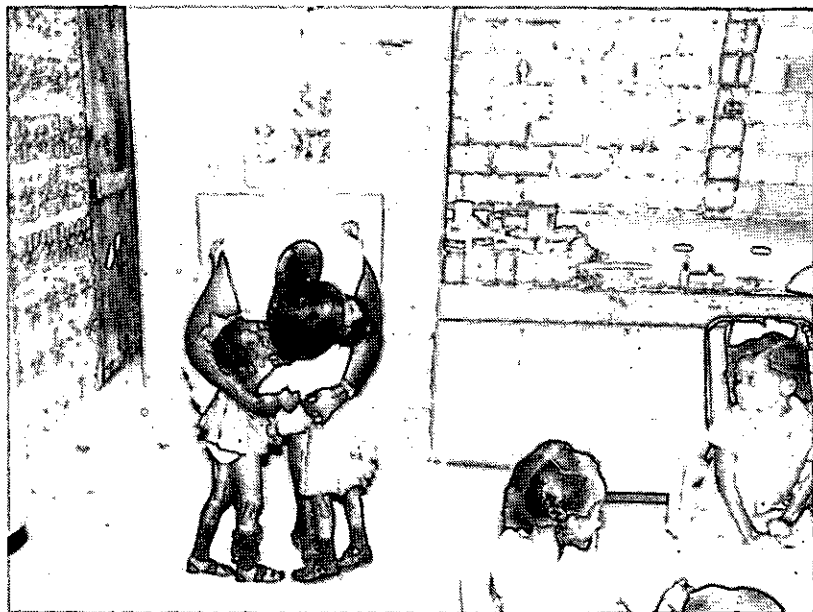
and more towards an industrial economy brought about by the oil and steel industries nearby.

.....

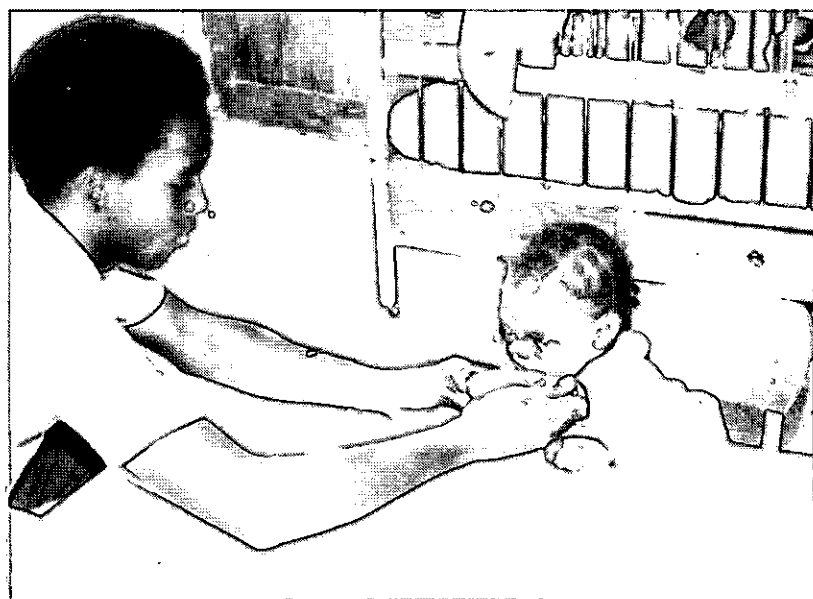
In the early stages, if a visitor wanted to see Servol in action he would be directed to a little one roomed office found in an old building in one of the alleys of Laventille. From there he would be taken round the Laventille area to visit the projects at different points in the area.

Today the focal point of Servol is the "Life Centre", which houses all the different activities and projects under one roof. It is a rather bewildering experience to see a number of vocational skills departments, interspersed with a nursery school, plus a medical and a dental care area and catering service. This gives way to wonder that there is seemingly no undue confusion. The coordinator may tell you it is "organized confusion" — a term that means nothing until you have experienced and worked in the field. Only then does it become a common and understandable part of Servol's vocabulary. This "organized confusion" despite its multi-faceted nature has been moulded into a "well greased unit" which replaces and substitutes many of the physical, mental, emotional and social deprivation suffered by youths in any low income area. It stands in as "surrogate mother — father — parent figures" bringing in the persons of staff who are carefully selected to meet the emotional, sociological, psychological, cultural and educational needs of the youth. The idea is to build up self-esteem and self-worth to enable him/her to cope with and to be integrated into the often hostile and adult world of the wider society.

Servol sees its role as educational in the broadest sense, from the training of young people in skills to the raising of the consciousness of communities in an effort to make them aware of their rights and the strategies to be employed in obtaining them. Their concept is to have a group of people who in spite of having been condemned as failures, work and produce in an environment void of hostilities which instils a feeling of security and stability. This concept was to some an impossible challenge. The epithet inscribed on the wall at the Beetham Life Centre proved otherwise.



*. . the centre must assume the role of parent substitute . . .*



*. . replace callousness by tenderness*



TO THOSE YOUTH OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
WHO HAVE BEEN REFERRED TO  
AS UNTRAINABLE AND UNEMPLOYABLE  
AND WHO IN CONSTRUCTING THIS BUILDING  
HAVE COMPREHENSIVELY DEMONSTRATED  
THE ABSURDITY OF THESE EPITHETS.  
SERVOL RESPECTFULLY DEDICATES THIS CENTRE

SEPTEMBER 1977



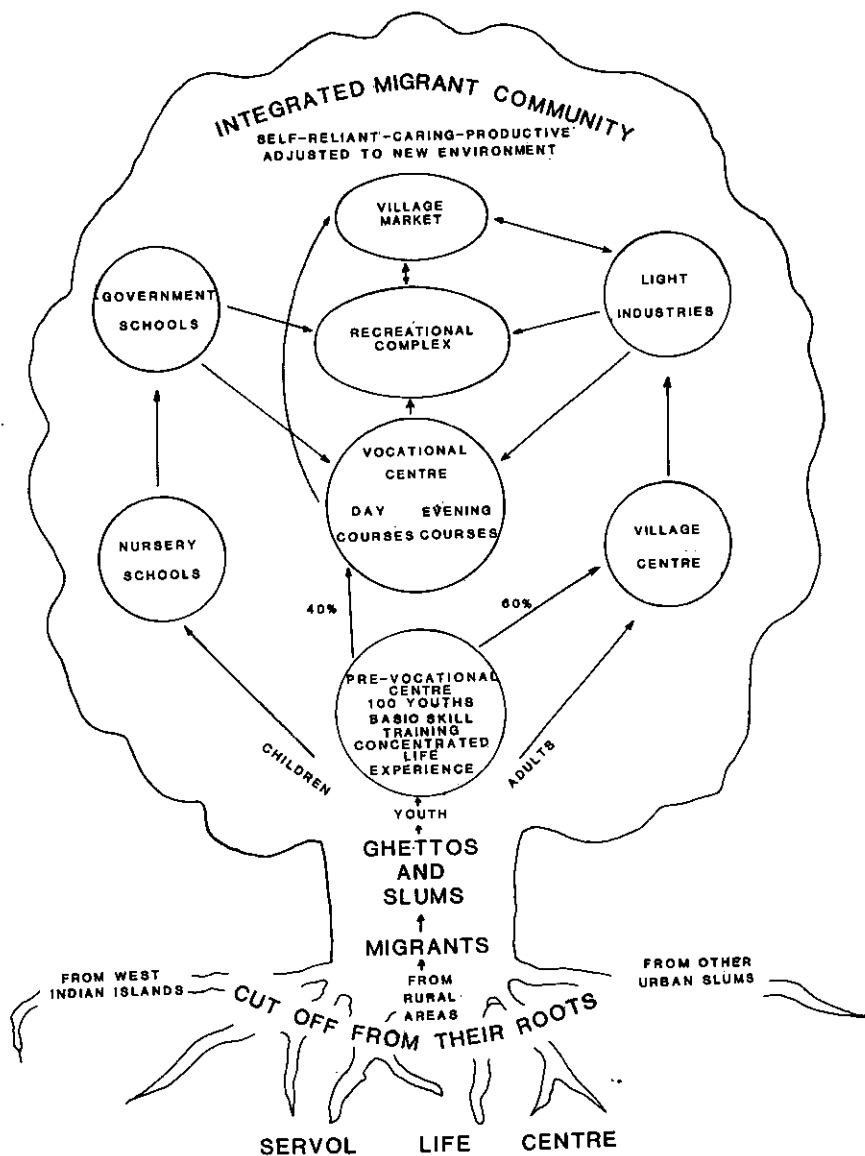
“TO THOSE YOUTH OF TRINIDAD  
AND TOBAGO WHO HAVE BEEN  
REFERRED TO AS UNTRAINABLE AND  
UNEMPLOYABLE AND WHO IN  
CONSTRUCTING THIS BUILDING  
HAVE COMPREHENSIVELY  
DEMONSTRATED THE ABSURDITY OF  
THESE EPITHETS SERVOL  
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATES THIS  
CENTRE”

Those youths and their building have now become a challenge to that part of the society who think and believe that “no good can come from behind the bridge”. It becomes a “beacon/mentor” for those future students who have little or no confidence in their ability to be able to achieve anything either personally or otherwise in their lives. It bears out the statement “Servol does good things for the youth”.

“You enjoy something that has a lot of colours — not one bland colour — Servol has all colours evenly blended”. Servol has a mixture of old and young, adolescents and middlings. They are the ones who provide the colour — each contributing in his/her own unique fashion. They are encouraged to use and see their own colours, to use their own initiative in the working out of their own lives, particularly that life in the not too far distant future, the adult life — one which will be a key factor in the shaping of the total life of the society of Trinidad.

Paul Keens Douglas’s poem sums up the thrust of Servol’s programme:

“To be what one is  
Fulfills the essence of existence  
None is greater or lesser  
For you alone are you  
An apology for self  
Is an insult to creator  
To know this is to begin  
To live this is to journey”.



## **. . . SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF A STRANGER**

*The first visible attribute of a Life Centre is life. One observes that everyone there is busy, intently absorbed in what he is doing. In a situation hitherto characterized by listless discontent, that is impressive before anything else.*

*But more follows. The earnest involvement seems to spring from each activity being a response to a salient local need, however impotent the community may have formerly felt to effect its desires. It is obvious that the participants are precisely that, not mere recipients of help from others.*

*Third, one becomes aware that Servol does serve others. Although originally — and still mainly — directed to youth, whose talents were being frustrated and wasted, it mobilizes them to care for young children, older people, the handicapped, the sick — those who, like all of us, can only partially care for themselves. It melts the heart of the sceptical observer as well, to see how the stony, protective shell of suspicion, resentment and pessimism has been dissolved and the potential for hope, work and love has sprung forth.*

*Next — as one tours the Beetham Centre especially, but also the other places and projects — he begins to grasp the sophistication and powerful foresight implicit in the whole evolving complex. This is no small or short-term enterprise. When teenage boys happily undertake to care for infants — and adopt a higher standard of fatherhood and husbandhood — along with acquiring advanced skill in construction or printing or even administration, they are on the way to remaking their society, in ways that everyone must welcome.*

*Yet there is more to see, much more to come. Finally one leaves with a surging sense that others should see it and feel it too.*

### **Summary of the Functional Aspects of the Life Centre**

- Each centre covers more than one function and overall includes a wide range of services from day nurseries and pre-school to vocational, medical, dental and social services.
- An environment made up of people of all ages, activities and functions where the students not only learn vocational skills but, more significantly become acquainted with, and aware of their own personhood. Their likes and dislikes, their inhibitions and their talents, their weakness and strengths.

This knowledge is acquired by a carefully planned programme based around skill training.

- Each centre has its own management team — depending on the needs of the centre, will dictate the number on the management team. Five out of six centres has a co-ordinator who is accountable to the Executive Committee. The nature and complexity of the projects demands a great deal of team work. This not only makes for efficient running of the centres but by allowing interaction and creating a situation of interdependence adds to the quality of life.
- Servol acts as both a productive enterprise and a centre for skill training and education. Each is programmed to serve others.
- The students are taught productivity but not competitiveness. As their skill and knowledge increases, so does he/she become more productive. On the site job training is a feature of the overall programme.
- The various departments try to cover operational expenses through income activities in the course of the training.
- On entry to the Life Centre all students (boys and girls) go through an orientation course.
- Nursery schools and Day Care Centres at all complexes together with Nursery Schools in the surrounding areas.
- Servol functions effectively relying on personnel who are mainly para-professionals rather than those with high academic qualifications. There is always a high percentage of the local community involved. In the initial stages, Servol depended on a number of volunteers from the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force.<sup>1</sup>
- The orientation of the Servol Programme is towards immediate employment. A motivated, employed youth can increase his skill by on-the-job-training and by attending

1 See Appendix C for information.

more advanced courses in the Government Technical Institutes. The whole thrust of the Servol effort is to get the boy/girl into the field of employment as soon as possible.

- The Beetham Life Centre was the first centre to pioneer a programme of care for the aged.<sup>1</sup>

## Servol Projects

The following is a list of Servol's accomplishments over the last twelve (12) years.

- building up of an increasingly complex organization which uses *para-professionals* rather than highly qualified staff.
- setting up of thirteen (13) *nursery schools* in urban and rural low income areas to help in the development of neglected children at crucial stages in their lives.
- taking young women with limited academic background and training them to be *nursery school teachers* in the areas in which they live.
- using the nursery school as a focal point around which to build *community development*.
- reaching out to hostile, suspicious *youth* through sports and cultural programmes.
- use of selected members of Trinidad and Tobago's *Defence Force* as a new and effective type of social worker.
- establishment of *para-medical training and services* in rural and urban area.
- setting up schools for *retarded and deaf children* which prepare them to eventually enter training programmes for normal children.
- establishment of *family farms* as part of an agricultural cooperative programme.

1 See Appendix D: The Old People's Programme.

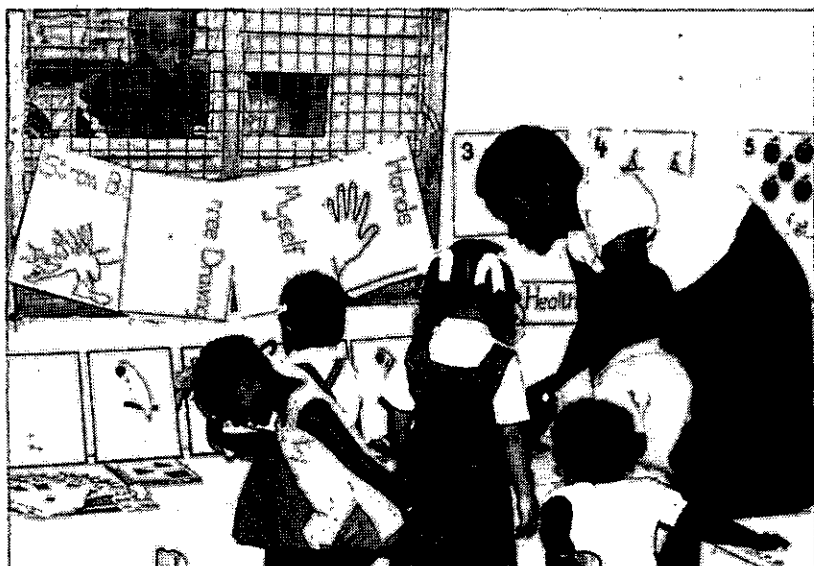
- setting up of very effective *skill training programmes*, in welding, carpentry, plumbing, electrical installation, masonry, catering, handicraft, sewing, nursing and child-care which cover their operational expenses and enable the participants to obtain good jobs.
- pioneering a programme of *care for the aged* by the young for their mutual benefit.
- providing young and old with *literacy and self-awareness programmes*.
- initiating a gradual handing over of projects, schools and centres to *community control*.
- setting up a *Nursery School Teacher Training Centre* for girls from both Trinidad and neighbouring islands.  
(Refer to Appendix F)
- a *residential block* attached to the training centre which will provide accommodation not only for the students, but for those interested in sharing the Servol experience.

A feature of Servol is its hesitancy to list or reel off these accomplishments as being anything out of the ordinary. They are not. They, the Servol people, like to think and have reason to believe that the real achievement lies not in the projects themselves but the motivation and spirit that prompted them.

Projects are initiated only when it is seen that there is an absence of a specific aspect in the context of living and development, e.g. nursery schools and life centres.

Servol has always insisted on nursery schools for a two fold reason. Firstly, the inherent value of nursery schooling both in itself and more specifically for underprivileged children. It is a well known fact that the early formative years are the most important in establishing a basis for learning. Much should be done in the family environment. However, a great number of children are deprived of the normal family life, therefore to enable them to cope with schooling at a later date, a substitute needs to be available.

If the middle classes are becoming more and more aware of the



*... really good training for nursery school teachers ...*



*... to this Nursery School come parents and their children ...*



advantage of pre-school education, how much more vital is it for the underprivileged child?

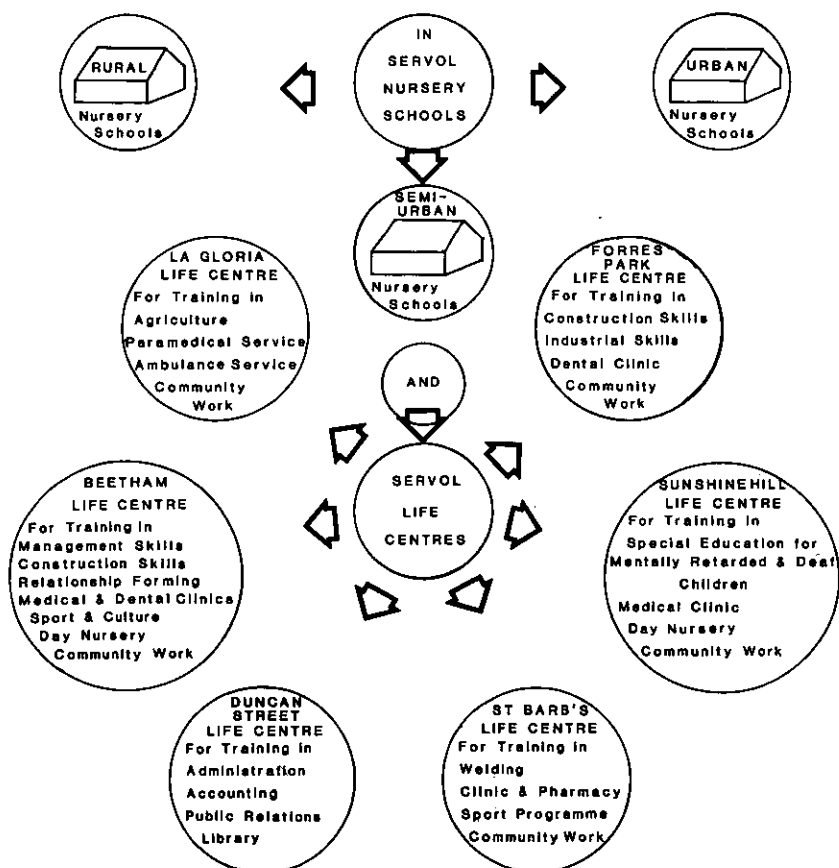
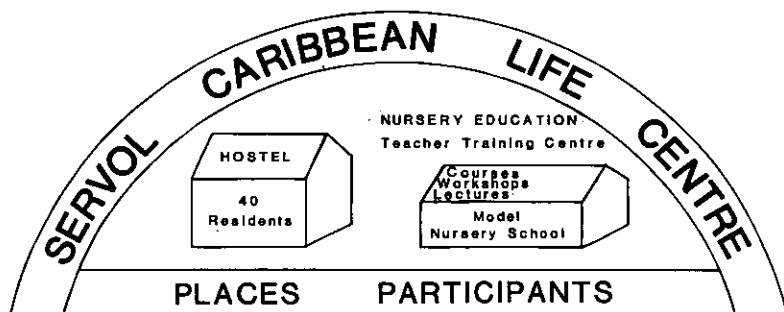
Secondly, the nursery school is the best means of unifying the community. People are willing to forgive and automatically forget their bias and other problems when involved with the children. In other words the nursery school becomes the tool whereby a disjointed and fragile community often becomes a well-knit unit.

The question of success or failure does not come into the Servol arena — all projects fall short of what is actually required or envisaged since the community is a “dynamic, living growing entity which develops new needs as soon as the existing ones are filled”.<sup>1</sup>

At one stage of its career Servol set up three (3) agricultural projects which was an effort to attract rural youth back to land. Not one of the farms succeeded with its intended plan. One became an agricultural project involving senior citizens, another evolved a system of family farms — the third is functioning in a haphazard fashion. Has it been a “failure”? What appeared a failure to some was in practice the beginning of a more relevant and innovative agricultural project.

Servol will have failed when it stops believing and trusting in people, when it does not give credit in their ability to solve their own problems, when it no longer supports but rather becomes a dependency system.

1 Servol Faces the Eighties (p. 17).



## NEEDS OF THE TIMES

Recognition of people as people, and recognition on an equity basis is perhaps one of the greatest needs in the world today.

Poverty of itself does not necessarily degrade or injure a person's humanity. Poverty of personhood, however, in the form of lack of recognition or contempt of their rights apart from breeding anger and violence can stifle a man's humanity.

The whole of the Caribbean today is a highly explosive situation. People who have known oppression, degradation and rootlessness for many years had in later years known and felt the taste of human liberty. Still later, however, this liberty/freedom was again being violated and encroached upon by either (sometimes both) external or internal aggression. This came from people wanting to exploit the islands either for their own or for another country's benefit.

It is difficult for any people to cope, while struggling to adapt and adjust to a totally new way of life brought about by a change in history — yet such a struggle would seem to be inevitable in the wake of industrialization in an increasingly technological age. Trinidad is no exception to the rule.

This has resulted in a large number of landless, rootless, rejected and unskilled people:

- landless because the land is being appropriated for other things.
- rootless because their security (land and home), and what they know has been taken from them.
- rejected because of who and what they were and unable to contribute to the new order due to lack of skills.

It is at this point then, that Servol can be seen to be a necessary organization in the Caribbean in this day and age for a number of reasons.

Servol has not only recognised the principle of equality but actually proclaims it by:

- providing, in a respectful and relevant fashion the opportunities denied a certain group of people by the traditional government system.

- recognising not only the potential of every person but also the need of every person to be a viable member of society, and it is to this end that it works.
- recognising the importance of realism in relation to job opportunities and skills required for these same jobs. Therefore, it has adopted a programme that will turn out an apprentice who is flexible enough to adapt to the constantly changing work pattern of today's society.

In lieu of the above, Servol realises the importance of there being a pivot from which people can move from, change and adapt to the new order. That pivot needs to be in the person themselves, and it is in this sphere that Servol intervened.

Servol concentrates on the building up of the inner forces that enables individuals and communities to withstand the affronts meted out to them on the basis of who and what they are, where they came from and yes, even their ancestry. At the same time it encourages people to transform their personal, racial and cultural perceptions into a strongly motivating force within themselves.

One of the most bandied about words in the Third World countries today is "development"; this word usually being prefixed by two others, "economic" and "human". The latter is usually an appendage to the former in that it is merely the tool used to generate a nation's economy. In other words there is very little, if any, real concern or respect for the human person.

Servol, by devising a programme in which the person is the focal point, and which enables him to become independent, indirectly creates a wealth of potential in all areas of development.

Therefore, today more than ever and especially in the Caribbean, an organization like Servol is not only necessary it is essential. Over the last ten to twenty years the Caribbean islands have achieved either independence or semi-independence. Each is struggling to achieve self-identity and self-actualization as a nation. There is no possible hope of achieving this unless the individual members of the society have attained this first. The emphasis is being placed on economy, productivity and prestige among other nations, (a false independence). The pulse of the nations — 'people' is being ignored, consequently the majority of nations are a replica of the dog trying to catch his tail. The dog

is going round and round, but its tail eludes him. So too does real independence elude the nations.

The crux of a person's independence is self-identity and self-actualization. The crux of a nation's achieving independence is people—the ordinary masses of people, not the 'elite'. It requires time and commitment. Independence cannot be gained in a day nor a year nor several years, but the fact of people moving together towards a mutual goal would be a self-actualizing thing and provide strength and vitality and would be a force to be reckoned with.

It is in this sphere that Servol is essential. It is able to tap the human potential which is encouraged to grow. Out of this emerges a community which not only contributes to its immediate community but of the nation/s at large.

## **II THE PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY THAT UNDERLIE SERVOL'S LIFE GIVING PROCESS**

"Life is a process of becoming what you most deeply are and what you were created to be".

(Thomas Merton)

.....

The words philosophy and psychology are rarely heard of in the Servol vocabulary. This is understandable in that Servol does not model its action and approaches on any particular series of theories or assumptions. Rather, it looks, listens and takes its lead from the realities of life at a particular moment of time. In other words it moves in response to the signs of the time. As a result Servol has initiated a technique which attempts to respond concretely and effectively to problems of injustice and oppression experienced by the most exploited segment of the population. It stems from a model of critical ongoing evaluation and research action. It participates in the transformation of social structures to build towards a 'juster' society in which the different people and different levels of society gain more equal rights and become more able to master and control their own destinies.

Servol bases its approach on the following assumptions:

- 1 that the individual has rights.
- 2 that society is part of a whole.

### **1. The Individual**

The individual has a right to utilize and express his/her experience in his/her own unique way. It is this process that contributes to human growth and the realisation of one's deepest potential. This is an indispensable response to that innate yearning of the human person to be recognised for who he/she is.

### **2. The Society**

Every segment of society is part of a whole, therefore, every sector of that society has a right in helping to formulate the social structure in which they live. The structures are then to

be adapted in such a manner that they contribute to the human growth and development of the total population.

Moreover two main events would seem to have both precipitated and determined the thrust and direction that Servol was to take:

- a the gaining of independence in 1962 resulted in the severing of the strong ties of colonialism, and with it a loss of the security and identity that it had provided.
- b The onslaught of industrialization and the awakening to individualism combined to effect mass migration to the city, causing unemployment in the face of unskilled labour. The extended family which until then had provided a nucleus of stability and security was to be replaced by a people without identity, a people who had lost their sense of belonging — a rootless people.

These two factors seemed to be climaxed in the 1970 Black Power Revolution. It was in the wake of this event that the search for identity came to the fore. The community 'behind the bridge' stood as one mass of people. Though seemingly powerful, they remained powerless 'behind the bridge' uncertain of what direction to take and how further to assert their 'power' and presence. It was at this point that Servol was born in response to the 'crying' need of this oppressed sector of the population. Sensitive to their human conditions and the silent aspiration of their inmost heart two lone men offered their timely help. The first spark of life was engendered and this was the beginning of Servol's life giving process, and the dawning of hope for those long isolated 'behind the bridge'. "How can I help?" was the often repeated question voiced by Servol and the response was met in a concrete way that spoke of real concern and interest. However, it became apparent that because of their background of long oppression they were unable to cope with the challenges of new-found employment which had been obtained at their request. They grew increasingly frustrated at their incompetence and inability to belong to the other world beyond the bridge.

This fact would seem to bear out the findings of psychology that assert that the frustration and tension caused in man is due to his lack of self-esteem and hence a feeling of non-acceptance of both of himself and others. Those 'behind the bridge' exemplified this.

Immediate action was needed to prevent despair and so the immediate present was the focus. It could then be said that Servol has employed a 'process' model rather than an 'outcome' model. It has created a structure and atmosphere whereby the person becomes aware of his own responsibility towards the growth and development of his own life. It is based on the need for the person to realise that his/her past experiences need to be formulated and integrated into the present situation. The whole process is geared towards becoming, rather than merely achieving.

The climate of the 'Life Centre' provides an integrated programme which enables the young people to aspire to self-hood/person-hood with respect — trust — self esteem.

### **1. The Individual**

The general framework is one of respect and trust which are necessary to effect the desired change and growth of an individual. This provides him with the tools with which to build his own world. Having in the past been rejected by home and the wider society it is hoped that he will experience the 'present' as accepting, trusting and caring. He needs to feel secure and stable if he is to respond in growth, and thus Servol establishes a base that creates an atmosphere and environment where this can happen. He is surrounded by caring adults whom he learns to trust and is left free to accept or reject the opportunities available. The choice and responsibility remain his, with guidance. The emphasis is on the individual in the belief that unless a person knows who and what he is, where he comes from, then nothing of any consequence can be achieved either for or by himself nor for the wider community.

If man's identity develops in proportion to his ability to take his part in the present day society then it is essential that he is properly equipped to do so. The skills required today are not the skills of yesterday. It is for this reason that Servol set up a vocational skills training centre.

In providing a skill training programme Servol realised the importance of skill acquisition in a much broader sense. Within the framework of the programme students learn the mechanism of the working world and its ethics. They learn how to cope by becoming aware of themselves as persons and by recognising that the world is theirs as much as anybody else's and by



occupying their place in it and contributing to its up-building.

The Skill Centres are contained within one complex providing a sense of direction in diversity.

The programme is divided into three sections

- a orientation,
- b skill training,
- c on-the-job-training.

### **a Orientation**

The orientation which lasts for four (4) months directs and initiates students into the mechanism of both Servol and skill training. It enables them to adjust and adapt to a disciplined and scheduled programme an aspect that is completely foreign to them in view of their long learned art of 'liming'. In this setting of security both of time and grouping they are introduced to the different trade departments and spend a short period in each. They learn that they are responsible for themselves — a fact they were not aware of, and are somewhat surprised to hear. The orientation is an important element in the total programme for it sets the tone and initiates the attitudes needed for the acquiring of skills and all it entails. It enables them to become accustomed to a kind of existence that is different from the one they know. A person can only cope with a certain amount of change without causing too much disruption to his personality. Therefore, the change needs to be taken gradually and gently, neither forced nor pushed. Because of his early experiences the youth usually comes to Servol with an air of bravado and nonchalance supported by the defence mechanism "get lost". Time and space are needed for adjustment — Servol provides this.

### **b Skill Training**

From the orientation programme the students move into the skill department of their choice. While learning their trade they are exposed to the operations of a small business enterprise. Each department covers operational expenses through income activities in the course of the training. Each department is supervised by one or two instructors. The numbers are limited to allow maximum interaction between various persons within the departments. This prepares them for on-the-job-training at a later

date. It is in learning to produce, to be productive that the youth acquires his skill. As his skill and knowledge increase so he also becomes more productive with a growing sense of self-esteem and hence satisfaction in his achievements.

### **c On-The-Job-Training**

This period enables him to become acquainted with and aware of the wider society. It is not too traumatic an experience, however, because he is not alone. He has people around him with whom he is familiar. His whole introduction to the wider society is done with a preliminary training and back-up support. The employers are found by Servol. There is frequent communication between the student and Servol, Servol and the employer, the employer and the student. It is at this period of his training that the student is considered to be in the productive field and receives what is called an 'incentive' in some cases, a bonus in others. The proceeds of a Servol job are distributed among the students in proportion to their productivity. Servol is a non-profit making organization.

Since the key to this life-giving process is that of self-esteem, opportunities are given to form attachments/relationships with the wider society — to reconcile himself/herself with that society. This does not mean that the person gives up or puts aside his identity within his local community — it means rather the expanding of his attitudes and values to encompass the whole. Servol embraces a number of generations from the very old to the very young. The majority belong to the local environment, with a number of professional people, doctors, nurses, dentists and teachers who come from beyond the bridge. This exchange is instrumental in effecting the needed reconciliation of the rich with the poor, the professional with the non-professional, the haves and the have nots, rather than a 'claim' or pseudo kinship relationship. They interact with the various peoples from different strata of society and find that those people the 'elite' whom they formerly ridiculed and derided are found to be warm hearted and loving people. They realise that it is people like these who are instrumental in enabling them achieve their goal — of being persons in their own right, responsible citizens and appreciated craftsmen.

Finally, and most especially, Servol is and becomes for the



*. . . to be taught how to hold, feed and play with children*

youth their extended family where the interaction and particular structure enable the students to acquire other attributes and values that contribute to a healthy and satisfying life. They learn how to care and share — and protect — they learn the value of people, young and old — they learn they are all equally important. They learn that life consists in giving and taking, not just taking nor just giving but a mixture of both.

They begin to feel a wholeness within themselves, there is mutual respect, trust and esteem. They can drop their defence mechanism of “get lost”. They are eager to spread their wings and fly across the bridge into the wider society to contribute to the nation as a whole. They have a sense of dignity, of pride and self-worth which enables them to look beyond their own world and experience another.

Far from attacking their would be oppressors of the past, those who ‘tried to kill them’ Servol urges —

“You don’t love that, you don’t love hatred and evil, of course. You have to practise and see the *real* gull, the good in everyone of them, and help them see it in themselves, that’s what I mean by love”.

(Jonathon Livingston Seagull)

## 2. The Society

There is an innate longing in man to be part of a whole, but this longing is very often unrealised because of his inability to be accepted in that world. Servol recognises the fact that the life-giving process can only be accomplished if a person can move in and out, around and about that world in a comfortable manner.

In order to assist in this process, Servol has set up a mini-world of its own by incorporating all different segments of society into its programme, mingling the local community with the wider community. People are able to interact with one another, where each finds the other unthreatening, human and trusting. Servol does this by having a number of volunteer workers from over the bridge. These volunteer workers come from all walks of life and include the house-wife, the labourer, the white collar worker, the professional, the doctor, the dentist, the nurse etc. This makes for exposure from both sides of the fence. Each can meet the other without being threatened. Outside of this context, because of fear, there is rejection from both sides. Consequently there is hostility and no growth.

Moreover, on the job training exposes the students to the normal working life of a person. Because he is skilled he finds himself accepted — it is from this acceptance that another barrier is broken down.

In the process of job training he is also exposed to how the other half lives — the wealthy. There is the catering department which sends students on placements to well known establishments such as the Hilton Hotel, BelAir, Kapoc etc. Here they not only can stand with dignity and respect because of their skills but above all the appreciation gained on account of their contribution and attitudes wins them a much desired place in society. They learn that these very people from across the bridge, their would be oppressors are now their equals. Each can stand on his own ground with mutual respect, trust and esteem.

The annual 'Poor Man's Dinner' is yet another way of bridging or reconciling those from both sides of the bridge. This event provides an opportunity not only for the rich to share with the poor but to do so with respect for their contribution to society. The Servol staff leads the way by modelling how to serve!! The rich on the other hand show how to partake of the simple fare of the 'poor man', (a bowl of soup and a root) with dignity! With



*... people brought together and allowed to interact*

time Servol's Poor Man's Dinner has become a 'Christmas Dinner' yet the fare remains the same.

.....

In attempting to flash out the philosophy and psychology of Servol's life giving process the following conclusions have been drawn:

The philosophy is one of intervention (respectful intervention) and integration — the psychology is based on community/familiarity, the process being an effort to assist a group of people to become fully participating members in a wider society.

The response to a cry for help was the very definite action of intervention. This initial act was the beginning of more and more intervention, done on the basis of respect and maintaining hope and trust. As each need was met another took its place.

At first the intervention was by individuals alone, and mainly directed towards individuals who in turn found themselves intervening in the life of their own local community. Subsequently these communities themselves were intervening in the life of their own community and individuals — the beginning of integration of the various groups. If the life giving process was and is to be maintained then Servol because of the principles involved finds herself indirectly involved with the much broader spectrum of society so that in effect its principle of intervention has caused Servol to act as a catalyst to reconcile the community "behind the bridge" with the wider society. The interweaving of the local community environment with the wider community draws both communities together with respect, trust and self-esteem.

- "Servol goes into the community, communicates and integrates with the people, and works with the people, and finally celebrates with the people after they have achieved their goal".
- .....

The key concept in the emerging of the philosophy, psychology and methodology was that of a "listening" process. This was born out of respect for people, and an acknowledgement that the people themselves knew the areas in which they needed help for their community/communities and themselves.

It was a listening that was sensitive to and showed empathy with the people — seen and heard from their perspective and within their framework — not from another's perspective or framework. It is this ability to listen and then act accordingly that has made Servol what it is today. It will be Servol's listening process that will decide its future — it is in 'listening' that Servol carries out her ongoing research and evaluation programme — a programme that may not be written down in so many words but is articulated in continuous action.

Servol's structure, its philosophy, its psychology and its methodology have evolved by proceeding intuitively, by listening to feedback, by treading softly and respectfully.

### **The Management/Administration follows the above Philosophy and Psychology**

Organizational and managerial systems usually follow traditional and well tried methods perceived from a series of suppositions and theories. They usually maintain a hierarchical system and separateness which requires expertise — qualified people.

Servol is different in that the management/administration evolved from the concept of people helping themselves and from the overall framework — that of service. There is no qualified 'elite' to carry out the management — instead there is what could be termed 'participative and team management/administration'. Each person has equal responsibility through application of their particular talents to the corresponding need in the management/administration area.

The instructor of each department is responsible to the Coordinator of the centre, which while autonomous is directly responsible to the Executive Committee whose head is the Executive Director. While being independent the Centres are being fed by central funds for capital items. The idea being that when all building and other capital items have been bought the centres are self sufficient.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Unlike other organizations Servol is not confined by a set constitution but rather by the aspirations of a charter — not

imposed from above but arising from the hearts of those who serve.<sup>1</sup>

Given the fact that Servol takes its direction from the people and their needs then it is the latter who will to a large extent determine the response. Even as this report is being written Servol is in the process of totally reorientating its programme in order to provide for the increasing numbers seeking admission. It is worthy of mention here that applicants 'qualify' for admission by the mere fact of being 'drop-outs' from the established *primary* school systems. In this understanding of Servol it is impossible to predict its future. If Servol's purpose is to nurture and facilitate life's process through its Life Centres then life and its demands will continue to be Servol's cue.

Moreover, because Servol helps to foster the potential from within the individual and his immediate community, then Servol cannot be duplicated as a ready solution to a problem. Its message springs from the people it serves and is relayed by them, therefore in another place with other people and environment the response will vary.

We can do no better than to hear what Servol itself declares:

Go to the people  
Live among them. Learn from them  
Love them. Serve them. Plan with them.  
Start with what they know  
Build on what they have  
— not piecemeal but  
— integrated approach  
— not show case but pattern  
— not relief but release  
Mass education through mass participation  
Learn by doing. And teach by showing.

In no way does this report give an adequate description of Servol, of what it means, what it does, what it can do, how it operates, who does it involve, etc. etc. etc. I have come to the conclusion that to write about Servol is an impossible task. It is limitless. The real essence of Servol is found in its elusiveness, its wholeness, its intangibility, and yes, even its incorrigibility. These are the qualities that give Servol its impetus. In the words of the President of Trinidad, Servol is an "extraordinary

1 See Appendix F for details of the Charter.



phenomenon". My eyes, my ears, my mind, my being does not allow me to catch the totality of Servol. Somehow I think the Aborigine would. There is an intangible quality within the Aborigine as within the Trinidadian, which allows them to sense things in a more total manner, what I term as intuition of the unknown.

Speaking of Servol in terms of philosophy, psychology, methodology and process does it a dis-service. According to one writer the "theoretical principles of social psychology, group dynamics and interpersonal relations are skillfully orchestrated into the life experience of Servol clients". There may be such theories but Servol does not work from *theories* or by them. It works from the reality of the situation step by step, it does not lag behind, it does not go ahead but stays with the moment and moves with the moment. Maybe that is the secret of Servol — it is always pertinent — therefore always vibrant and vital.

The following case studies illustrate this.

## **WE WERE LOST . . . AND FOUND BY SERVOL**

### **Lester Phillips — Mapplands**

*We the people of this village known as Mapplands ask that what is stated here be known throughout Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean Islands and even the world. We were a forgotten set of people, struggling in what seemed to be a lost world, praying and hoping for a miracle. Then one day in the year 1971, it came to our hearts' delight that the SERVOL organization rescued us. At this stage Fr. Gerard Pantin was so impressed by the approach made by our leader, Mr P. Thompson, that he asked the owners of the land — the late Dr Roderick Marciano for a piece of land in order that a building be erected for the purpose of the community getting together. We were successful in this bid and through Servol we had a Plan drawn by a voluntary Architect — Mr John Humphrey. The leader called on the villagers for suggestions on how the proposed building could be built. At a meeting the decision was taken that indoor bingos, excursions, tea parties and raffles be held to accumulate some money. Again the Servol group supported our every move to which we the villagers owe a lot, and words to this effect cannot be found. Then bloomed a lovely building which we are very proud to have today. Fr. Gerard Pantin will always be remembered for his inspiration in making*

*Mapplands the envy of all. We were fortunate to have a representative at the fifty dollars a plate dinner at the posh Hilton Hotel in 1971. We also have a kindergarten school in the village centre which we built.*

*There are many similar good works done by the Servol Organization. In Picton Road you have the Straker Village Nursery School; on Beetham Estate there is another venture by Servol including a Trade School and a doctor's office where one can get medical attention on prescribed days.*

*Many young people have been trained as carpenters, masons and electricians. Last but not least the spiritual values of the village have been given an uplift. We the villagers of Mapplands raise our hats to Servol and wish them everlasting success and may our Lord the holy one be with them always.*

## **THE SALT OF THE EARTH . . . IN PEPPER VILLAGE**

### **Stephanie Corraspee Hunte — Pepper Village**

*There is a saying that nothing happens before its time! Whether this is so or not it is not for me to say, but what I do know is that Servol chose the right time to make itself known and available to the residents of Pepper and surrounding villages through its representatives, of which I'm now a proud member. Yes! Servol has brought out the best of Pepper, making the people aware of all their hidden talents and the ability to share these with their neighbouring villages.*

*The opening of nursery schools, which not only give our young girls employment but having themselves trained by experts and given the opportunity to teach, love and care for children not their own; community promoters having the opportunity of visiting homes, talking to neighbours who before the advent of Servol they would have passed by, and by just asking them these few words. "How can we help?" to find out the joys and sorrows that surround the districts; the introduction of a much needed ambulance service to assist our sick and senior citizens to attend the various clinics and hospitals; the involvement of the young and the not so young of both sexes in nutrition courses, sewing classes and art and craft sessions and sports meetings. Yes, Servol might be like the molecricket looking for a home, but it surely found one in Pepper Village. We say thank you Servol for the good changes and tremendous impact you have made on the lives of the people of Pepper Village.*

## **SERVOL GAVE ME A START IN LIFE**

**Steve Duncan**

One day I was liming on the block with the boys when a Servol worker approached us and began to 'rap' with us about our future. He spoke to us about learning a trade. I decided to give it a try and registered for welding with a group of 20 youths. After a few months at the shop I was sent to join the group of apprentices who were building the Servol Centre on the Beetham Estate and I am proud today to say that I helped to build that centre.

Before I joined Servol I was very frustrated and I was tired trying to get a job; each employer said he would get in touch with me, but he never did and I got fed up.

I stayed in the Welding Institute for 18 months and graduated with a full Trade Achievement Certificate — making all A's in the National Training Board exams.

Servol had helped me and I was glad to take the opportunity I was offered to stay on as Assistant Welding Instructor after my exam. I would be able to help other youths in the same way I was helped.

Servol trains us for life. We learn how to build relationships with people in the community, how to employ ourselves, how to conduct ourselves, how to care about people of whatever race or class or age. We learn how to cope with problems and how to sort out ourselves.

A month ago I got the opportunity of going to join the Police Force. I wanted to do this for a long time — it was like a dream come true when I was called in for the interview. I was sorry to leave Servol but everybody in Servol was happy for me that I got the chance I wanted. It was a move up the ladder of success and they wanted what was best for me.

I will be learning to protect and serve my country and doing it well — the Servol way. I take this chance to beg the youth of the nation to work hard to better themselves — they can do it, because I was frustrated and I did it: thanks to Servol.

## **SERVOL: WHAT IT HAS DONE FOR THE PEOPLE**

**Bernard Mitchell — Carpentry Instructor, Forres Park Life Centre**

Servol is here not to make every poor man rich but to help the less fortunate develop themselves. Although most of the children in our area

attended Primary School, they did not achieve much, as a matter of fact many of them cannot even read or write properly.

Realising that the whole community had one common interest: to make sure that their children were better educated than they were. Nursery Schools were started (for earlier education). The people in the communities appreciated these and preferred it to keeping their older children at home to look after younger brothers and sisters. In the Nursery Schools the children are taught togetherness, love, sharing and most of all to recognize the things, people and places in the surrounding and to appreciate them.

Then came the Life Centre. To many parents it was a relief to get Johnny out of the house; even though they knew Johnny was not interested in becoming a tradesman. These parents are the ones who feel that Servol should then find jobs for their children, they do not understand that Servol gave their children a start and it was up to them now to try to help themselves.

Then there are those who see Servol helping to change the community socially, making them realise that they do not have to live just like Daddy, Uncle or Grandad. There is room for change and here is their opportunity.

These are the people who are giving us encouragement to help them. They are seeing Servol as a stepping stone to improving their personal-ity, a better community, a better job, in fact a brighter future.

### **. . . ONLY KINDNESS AND SERVICE**

#### **Mrs Neverson — Senior Citizen — Beetham Estate**

When Servol first started to build their school near to my home on the Beetham Estate, my first thought was that with the teenagers nearby, it would be noisy, and they may be disturbing to my husband and myself. But, what a wrong thought this was! Servol, has only been kindness and service to both of us. The teenagers visit us regularly and when my husband and myself were ill with the flu some time last year, they took over my housework for me completely for a couple of days. They bathed me and kept the place clean so that I could rest. Imagine they even cooked our meals!

Mr Neverson and I know we have only true friends in Servol, and its a good feeling to know they are so close to us.

## **HOW I SEE SERVOL**

**Owen Clark — President, Welfare Council, Beetham Estate**

Truth and trust, in my opinion is what Servol uses as the main factor in their approach to people who need help in general. If you ask anybody in Beetham, in Laventille about Servol one thing will come out: Servol trusts people and so they do not see them as being dishonest. Very often people who are neglected never had the chance to be honest to prove that they can be honest. In helping people in the community to work together to get the things they need and the things they feel can better their position, Servol trusts people and are truthful to them. And the people know too that once you trust them you treat them as people, you respect them and then you can help them to be better persons.

I see as one of Servol's main aims that they teach young people to feed and clothe themselves, and this I believe is the greatest thing that any man or organization can do for the human race. Servol is well on their way to becoming the greatest self help social organization in the Caribbean.

## **IT STARTED WITH A BOWL OF SOUP**

**Georgina M. Masson — Public Relations Director — Hilton International, Trinidad**

A little over ten years ago, Father Gerry Pantin and Wes Hall, joined me for lunch to discuss a new project — Servol.

It was felt that the area where our Hotel could become involved and make the greatest contribution was in Fund Raising. Following on an idea of Father Gerry's the Poor Man's Dinner was inaugurated and subsequently held every year in the Ballroom of the Trinidad Hilton. This function is Servol's main source of much needed revenue.

I was from the beginning, very impressed with the enthusiasm, dedication and realistic plans for Servol. Over the ten years I have been even more impressed by the ability of Father Gerry and his team to put his plans into effect so successfully as well as maintain such honest commitment to Servol and the under-privileged in our country.

Hilton International Trinidad is proud to have been associated with Servol from its inception and will continue to be available always to help in whichever direction is possible by the Hotel.

It may be of interest to note that in addition to Fund Raising, the Hotel offers further training and exposure in the Kitchens to trainees from the catering department of Servol Beetham Life Centre.

### III CONCLUDING REMARKS ON SERVOL AND ITS FUTURE IN AUSTRALIA

#### **"The Present Stirs with Change"**

This is an almost universal phenomenon. Every part of the world is feeling the effects of these stirrings — whether it be to bridge the gap between the descendants of the land's original people and those of their conquerors; whether it be an attempt to gain recognition, status and equality in a multicultural or alien society; whether it be a political, social or economic crisis — these stirrings will pave the way for the world of the future as they have already paved the path and direction of the organization Servol.

This is perhaps why the President of Trinidad had no hesitation in predicting a future for Servol. In September 1980 he commented "At the age of ten it (Servol) is strong and vibrant and can face the future with equanimity though not with complacency . . . I look forward with confident anticipation to the encomiums which will be justly showered on Servol when it achieves its Silver Jubilee".

It is the principles and attitudes that underpin the philosophy that enabled Servol to develop its present structure, which is a response to a particular situation at a particular time. Ten years from now the structure may change but the principles and attitudes which govern the Servol model are likely to remain constant.

It will be the implementation and development of these same principles and attitudes that will allow for an Australian organization akin to the Servol model.

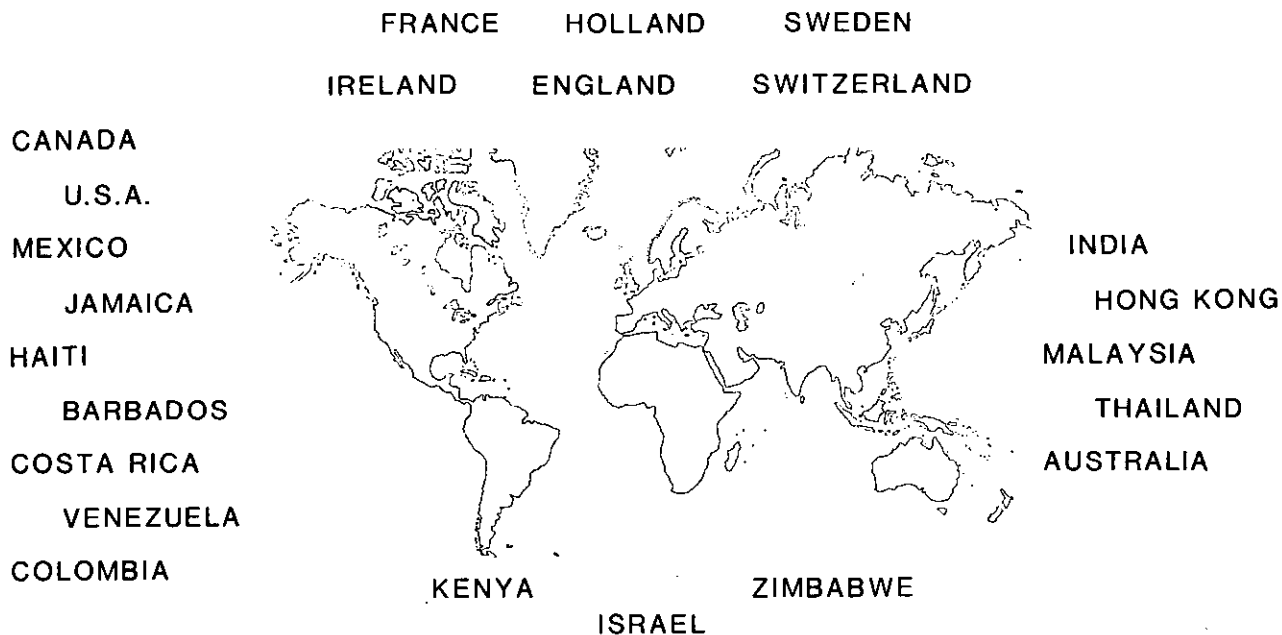
Included in the Servol files is a world map headed by the caption "The Servol Message Spreads".

The focus and integral element of this message is people — a total group of people: men, women and children. It is the total group rather than a selective band that defines and determines the needs/aspirations and development of their own community, plus the wider and national community.

It is this core element then that forms the basis of the message of Servol — "the principle of equity".

This principle must not become just a glib phrase but must be accepted and acted upon accordingly, being careful not to allow

# THE SERVOL MESSAGE SPREADS



AS SERVOL MEMBERS CONTRIBUTE TO SEMINARS AND ADVISORY MISSIONS

cultural differences, expectations, customs and values override equity (cultural arrogance).

The following characteristics are integral to the above principle and exemplified in the "Servol Model".

- 1 The basic attitudes of respect and recognition for
  - people as people; and of all generations
  - their personhood and their human rights, irrespective of race, colour, creed, class or status in the community.
- 2 Whatever the needs of a person or community as expressed by that person or community, must be based upon the principles inherent in the local tradition/heritage.
- 3 There had to be some indication from people themselves that they wanted to design, implement and participate in both their development as a people and a person — this together with the growth and development of their local and wider communities.

The most essential and core quality of Servol's attitude is the importance of people, and their participating and shaping not only their own personal growth and development but that of the local community, which in turn extends to the national community.

The above factors have enabled a group of people (Trinidadian) to mould and develop their various groups as well as themselves (personally) into an integrated and developing community on a local and national scale.

Not only has it taken root in individual and group pockets in Trinidad, and other parts of the Caribbean, but the spirit which motivated Servol into what it is today has become part of the national heritage or legacy of Trinidad.

Australia's original heritage, that of independence, has become usurped by an almost total dependent situation, "welfare" (service delivery) — a policy almost absent in the Caribbean.

If parts of the Australian scene are to move towards the much healthier aspect of Servol, that of self-help and development, then one has to look for situations where the Servol principles can be applied. It is not a case of transplanting Servol, but applying its philosophy, respectful intervention and integration, and principles to assist and support in the development of a less dependent status for the indigenous people of the country, the Australian Aborigines — who have an unbroken history extending back some 40,000 years. Their land was taken by settlers in 1788 and



they were subjected to a policy of genocide, later to be replaced by patronising handouts.

They have a proud tradition and heritage, and have recently begun to take action to regain control of their own future. However, in so doing, they are facing enormous obstacles — not least of which are the appalling economic and social conditions prevailing in many Aboriginal communities.

By 1981 there were approximately 160,000 Aborigines comprising approximately 1.2% of the Australian population. They live in three broad demographic situations: traditional communities, rural communities and urban communities. Each situation has its own structure and system of operations and its own problems to overcome.

The general situation is characterised by poverty, inequality, unemployment, violence and ill health. Thus:

- in general, unemployment is at least six times more likely for Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people.
- the likelihood of being imprisoned is 12 times greater for Aboriginal people than for non-Aborigines, rising to 16 times more likely in some states.
- the homicide rate amongst Aboriginal people is in some areas 10 times the average for non-Aboriginal people in those areas.
- Aborigines have the worst ethnic blindness rate in the world. In some states the infant mortality rate for Aboriginal people is six times the national average. Tuberculosis amongst Aborigines in one state is 20 times that state's average for non-Aboriginal people.

Finally, authors of a World Council of Churches Report published recently (1981) used such phrases as "genocide by neglect" to summarise the Aboriginal situation. The team's leader (from Pakistan) commented:

"I am used to the pornography of poverty . . . but the plight of these people is truly shocking".

Another member of the team (from Africa) commented that he had never seen such poverty before, even in Africa.

Over the last few years a number of individuals and communities throughout Australia have voiced, and continue to voice, their dissatisfaction regarding their status and situation stemming from dispossession and its consequences — the most recent of these events being the Commonwealth Games Land Rights

AUSTRALIA



protest. It is incidents like this, together with the media coverage of their social conditions, which set the scene and *can* precipitate a positive response like Servol. The question which arises is "*Will, and can people hear their cries of dissatisfaction, and, if they do, can they rise to the challenge that faces them?*"

This will be the deciding factor in the future of a Servol type programme in Australia. It will require an attitudinal change on behalf of all people — to understanding, sharing, acceptance and respect of and for one another's heritage, customs, values and culture throughout Australia.

If this happens, then there can be a future for the Servol model in Australia — a model which would no doubt move in a different direction to that in Trinidad. In other words, it would depict the needs of the present which, because of history, time, political and social organizations, are different to those of Trinidad.

The Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute has the characteristics, qualities and potential to develop the Australian equivalent of Servol. The greatest obstacle facing the Institute is the intensive and consistent obstructionism that it faces from a small section of the central government department.

However, in spite of this difficulty, it has grown to the point where it now services and works with Aboriginal residents from forty communities spread throughout the country. In spite of the pressures placed upon them, the staff of the Institute have demonstrated with enthusiasm its loyalty, commitment and capacity for work. It is anticipated that the Institute will not only survive but will also grow and thrive to the point where it makes a very significant contribution to the development and recognition of the Aboriginal society as an integral and *dominant* part of the total Australian society.

Contained within the principles and attitudes that underpin the Servol philosophy are several basic but essential attributes — genuine concern and respect for, and belief in people. These attributes, together with the ability to hear the 'stirrings of change' have set the Servol tradition.

The future of and the direction taken by Servol will depend on the extent to which the established tradition is viewed.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **The Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute**

The Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute was set up in 1978 by two Aboriginal women — Margaret Valadian and Natascha McNamara. It was the first Institute set up by Aboriginal people to give training for Aboriginal people. It has a Board of Management — most of whom are Aboriginal.

The Institute provides an opportunity for Aboriginal people to have training in the things which they see as being important. Some of this training is done in communities. Some of the training is done at the Institute in Sydney.

The Institute provides training for Aboriginal people in many parts of Australia. It has two main programmes.

It provides training in self-management for Aboriginal communities.

It provides training for people who are concerned for Aboriginal youth.

The training usually takes place through training workshops. A training workshop is a time when Aboriginal people come together to talk about their training needs, and to learn from each other and from the Institute staff.

Each workshop only lasts for two weeks, because the Institute feels that people should not be asked to leave their families and their communities for longer than two weeks.

During these two week workshops, Aboriginal people have an opportunity to come together and talk about the way forward. They can talk about new community management ideas which they may need to know about — such as contracts and budgets. They can talk about youth — about the old way of bringing up youth, new changes which have taken place, and the problems which are worrying them.

Between workshops the staff of the Institute visit communities to talk with people who have been to workshops — and to talk to other people (such as elders, council members) and other groups (like mothers clubs and youth groups).

As well as talking about the needs of their community, the people who come to training workshops have a chance to learn new skills — and to share old skills from their community with people from other communities. They may learn basket work or

leather work. They may learn new sports and games. Whatever they learn they can later share with other people when they return to their own communities.

The Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute provides an opportunity for Aboriginal people to learn new knowledge and new skills. It gives Aboriginal people a chance to share their ideas with Aboriginal people from other communities. It also provides time for Aboriginal people to sing and dance together — to be proud of their culture and the ways of their parents.

They can then return to their communities and share what they have learnt with other members.

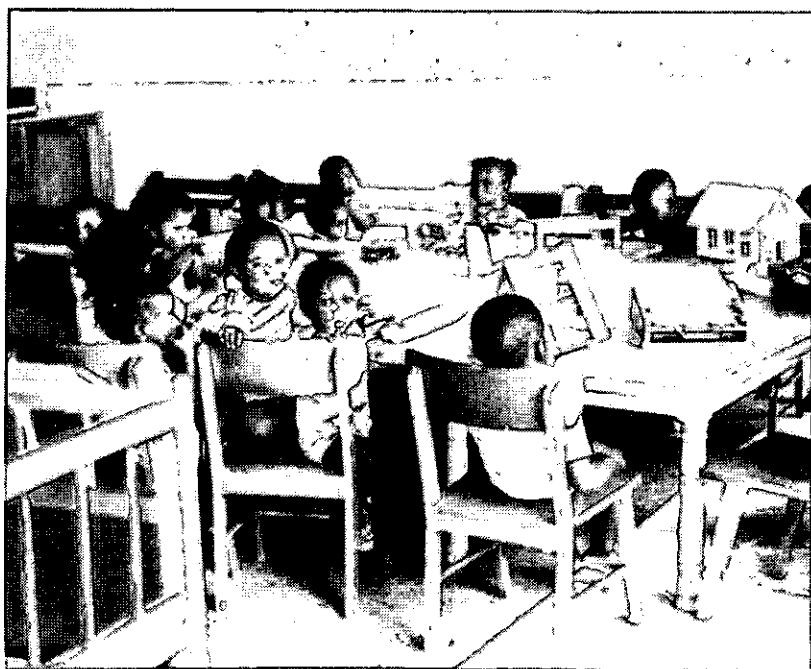
The Institute's motto is "Each One Teach One". We believe that every person who learns at the Institute must go back and teach others. In this way, knowledge can grow and spread and Aboriginal communities can become stronger, better places to live in.

## APPENDIX B

### Project Overlook

- a Setting up of nursery schools in the area.
- b A health and nutrition programme.
- c Efforts to help impress sub-standard housing.
- d Adult education and leadership training.
- e A training programme in vocational skills and relevant technology.

The Servol Organization from the indication relayed by the examination from their nursery schools, has spearheaded a quality of institution in village communities which is responsible for a number of commendable achievements. These achievements reflect the foresight, integrity and dedication of its members (Evaluation Report on Child to Community prepared for Servol by Personnel Management Services Ltd.).



*The foundation stones of the project were four nursery schools . . .*

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force**

After the initial stages of Servol's history members of the Defence Force provided the nucleus of the Servol team. The burden of the work could not be carried by the original volunteer workers who because of their commitments and responsibility were unable to give more than a few hours a day/week. Servol needed full time workers, but with no money to pay salaries what could be done. The Commander in Chief of the Defence Force was approached — after discussion with the various authorities and ministries the Defence Force agreed to release twelve (12) volunteer personnel for full time work in the Servol project while still maintaining status in their respective force.

The twelve volunteers frankly admitted that they had volunteered for the assignment as they thought it might provide an escape from the rigours of military life. They received inservice training in development work and several attended courses in social studies at the University of the West Indies. A new type of social worker was being developed — they (the volunteers) had all lived in, and understood the environment in which they would work. There was no cultural barrier between them and the people. Not being academically oriented they seldom tried to impose their ideas on the people or force an interpretation of a certain sociological situation but were prepared to keep their ear to the ground and work at the pace of the people. Five and a half years later, eight of these men were still working in the vastly expanded Servol.

## APPENDIX D

### The Old People's Programme

The Old People's Programme was initiated by two dynamic female volunteers. They demanded to know what was Servol doing for the aged in the disadvantaged areas. A system was set up whereby people could contribute \$10.00 a month towards some needy old person.

At first it was felt that Servol should not involve itself with what, on the surface, seemed to be welfare work. But after mature consideration, the idea seemed to be genuine community involvement and it was decided to implement it along the following lines:—

- a Volunteers from the area were enlisted to seek out the most in need.
- b The money was not given in cash but in the form of food vouchers.
- c Arrangements were made with the shopkeepers to accept these vouchers, which would be redeemed and paid for at the end of each month by the community promoters.
- d The donor was given the name and address of the old person, and was encouraged to visit them from time to time, and take a personal interest in them.

The Old People's Programme has been an overwhelming success from every point of view. After more than three (3) years of operation, 238 people are giving their monthly contribution to a similar number of old, impoverished people. It is difficult to describe how much this tiny amount means to the people concerned and how they look forward to the monthly visit by the community promoters. However, this initiated part of Servol's programme has been taken over by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

To some people the above programme seemed out of character with Servol's approach. However, that aspect of poverty was the basic and overwhelming need at the time — therefore the involvement.

Its work with the elderly did not stop when the Government intervened — rather it enabled Servol to concentrate on the community building aspect, thus alleviating much of the loneliness and isolation that these people so often feel.



The following is an extract taken from an article by a Servol worker — which while being an individual account is indicative of the Servol approach, where the emphasis is placed on the 'person' and their need to be *loved* and *listened* to.

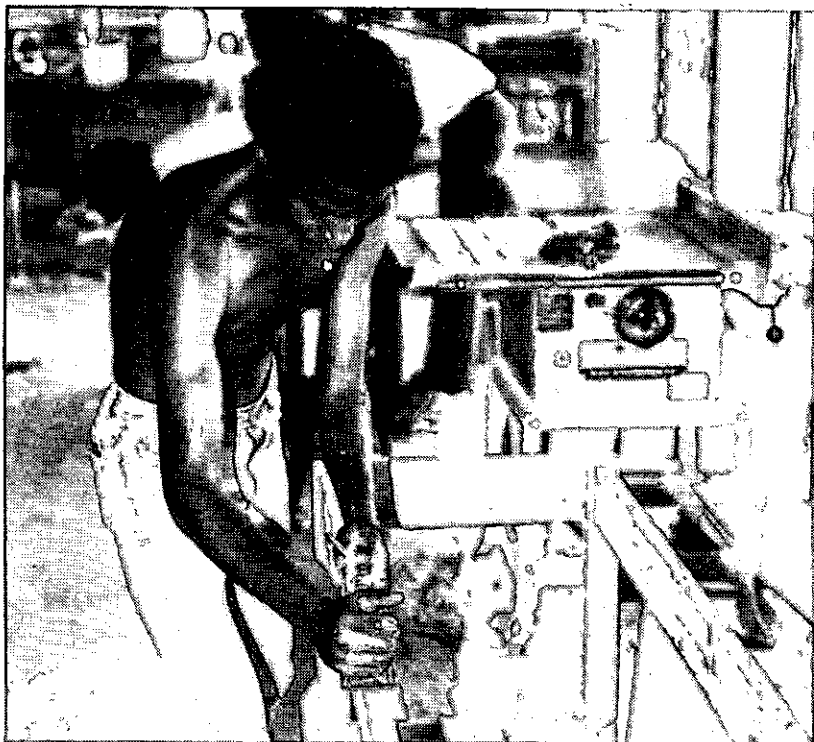
"We (the students and myself), started off by visiting the old people's quarters. What we saw appalled me. There were old people who were just lying on their beds, uncared for, the conditions they were living under I'd never seen before. For the first year, we helped mainly by trying to correct these conditions. This meant we spent a lot of time changing sheets, sweeping, mopping, painting, getting their groceries, and seeing that they took nourishing foods, even if it meant we had to prepare it ourselves. What we did not realise was the effect we were having on the whole community. Something very beautiful was happening. We saw the more healthy ones coming to assist us, we saw families seeing our examples, starting to visit their aged more regularly, and we saw young 'limers' around the area getting involved, and looking forward to our weekly visits. How much it grew. We prayed with them, laughed with them, we got involved with the old, the young, the good and the bad".



*. . . any educational model which is not community based is doomed to failure or to very limited gains . . .*



*. . . teach the community to look after its weaker members . . .*



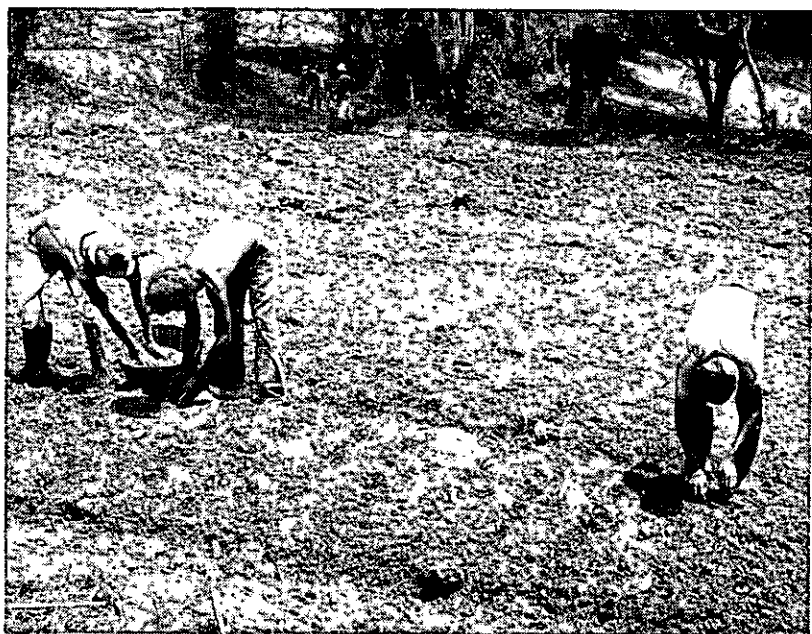
*. . . helping poor people to free themselves from the shackles of dependence  
which perpetuate the social conditions in which they live . . .*



*. . . there is talent and ability in the people of disadvantaged areas . . .*



*... to achieve a real concrete goal in life, albeit a thing as ordinary and unspectacular as the building of a basketball court . . .*



*... the search for an acceptable agricultural model . . .*

## APPENDIX E

### Servol

- “is unique in its conception of community development, in its determination of how social work should be done, and its remarkable and effective methods of integrating communities in a way that is relative to the culture of Trinidad and Tobago”.
- “is distinguished by its creativity and flexibility — two features very rarely found in established organizations”.
- “is an organization that implements small projects not major programmes”.
- “is a Community Organization in which the local people of communities are encouraged to help themselves”.
- “is an Organization that serves people (a community/organization/individual) who help themselves, but need a helping hand along the way”.
- “goes into the Community, communicates and integrates with the people, and work with the people, and finally celebrate with the people after they have achieved their goal”.
- “helps develop their personality of what you yourself can produce as that individual”.

Servol is:

“Unique . . . Magnificent . . . Something else . . . Vibrant . . .  
Caring and Sharing . . . Hope giving . . . Exceptional . . .  
Organized Confusion . . . A trier . . . Interesting . . . A  
Beacon — Mentor . . . Something you would never come  
across again . . . Challenging . . . Strange Animal . . .  
Extraordinary Phenomenon . . . Original in its Simplicity”.

## APPENDIX F

### Course Content

#### 1 Orientation

Movement of trainees in small groups so that they will be exposed to the different areas of training thereby giving them the opportunity of a final choice in their chosen trade etc. During this time the trainee is made aware of why he/she is here, and given guidelines in health, sanitation etc. Personal and weekly assessments are made so that staff and the trainee could know more about himself/herself. A final assessment is made at the end of the orientation period also giving the trainee the opportunity to make a final choice.

#### 2 Theory

A short period of note taking mainly concentrating on sketches and explanations of why things are done.

#### 3 Practical

The majority of time is spent in this part of the programme where the actual skills of the trainee is developed, thereby preparing them for . . .

#### 4 Job Training

a The trainee through arrangement by Servol is sent into a particular field of employment to practice the things taught to him/her at the centre and to see if he/she can fit in.

b Arrangements for Job Training are made by Servol. Servol is paid for the services provided by the trainees and from these funds a weekly/monthly allowance is given to the trainee to be set off against any extra expenses involved in getting to and from the job training area. The balance is credited to the account of the Servol Institute concerned and later distributed as follows:—

- i a percentage thereof goes to the said Servol Institute for fees which the student ceases to pay on entering upon job training.
- ii in settlement of fees which may be in arrear.
- iii the balance is paid to the trainee as an incentive to saving.

5 Trainees usually return to their classes about a week or two previous to exams.

- 6 After exams the trainees return to the job on his/her own initiative.
- 7 The uniform colours are . . . trousers for the boys with shirt or shirt jackets, and . . . skirts (gore style) for girls with . . . blouses.
- 8 The uniform is to be worn at all times, unless so specified by authorities. Proper footwear should be worn with uniform.
- 9 The monthly fee of Thirty Dollars (\$30.00) should be paid regularly to avoid inconvenience.

## **Allowances**

### **Allowances are granted on the following basis:—**

- a Students having reached the stage of productivity with minimum supervision are now sent on job training to gain the experience of employment.
- b Arrangements (contract letter) are made between Servol and the employer as regards time, income etc.
- c This is the part of the course where the trainee stops paying fees and is now granted an allowance to enable him/her to travel to and from the place of employment.
- d An accumulated amount for the time the trainee spends in outside training will be granted to the trainee on taking their exams or otherwise seen fit.
- e Incentives are granted on performance of work, punctuality and conduct of student over a period of time and on jobs (internal).

## **Punctuality and Attendance**

The class day begins at 7.30 a.m. when the bell is rung and all trainees assemble in the courtyard. The flag is run up by six self appointed trainees (changes daily). The daily prayer is then said after which the groups separate for sanitary practices. There is a one hour break for lunch.

Keeping in mind that the trainee is being prepared for employment, it is important that proper time be kept and regular attendance is needed, this is what will be required on the actual job.

## **Conduct**

Good conduct is encouraged at all times and this could be easily achieved by following the simple regulations.

## **Examinations**

The trainee is preparing among other things for the National Trade Achievement Certificate which is given by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Servol Training Course recognised by this same Ministry.

Examinations take place annually in the month of July, and the examiners are instructors seconded by the Examinations Board of the Ministry of Education.

NOTE: Punctuality, Attendance and Conduct is the third Factor on the Trade Achievement Certificate.

## **Nursery School Teacher Training Centre known as The Caribbean Life Centre**

### **The Idea Behind This Centre**

The chart of the Caribbean Life Centre shows clearly how it knits together under one umbrella and in one training programme, each and every one of the existing Servol projects. This Life Centre comprises two adjacent buildings; one is the existing school which will become the Nursery School Teacher Training Centre, the other is the hostel which will be built by the Servol Construction Company and will accommodate up to forty residents.

The residential block will enable us to provide those who visit us with board and lodge at a minimum rate as well as offer them training opportunities. The general idea is that people interested in sharing the Servol experience or being trained in a particular field, will be able to stay at this Life Centre, and from here move into the Servol project which interests them. All the urban projects are within easy reach of the centre and Servol intends to obtain two mini-buses to assist transporting groups to the various projects in the rural areas.

As was already pointed out, Servol has touched almost every



aspect of the lives of people in its Life Centres. We have tried to work with very ordinary people in real life situations, to set up effective projects with them and to develop a sense of commitment and concern to all our workers. That all this works, is as exciting for us as for those who look at us. The existing structures and programmes were not planned in the formal sense of the term; all of it came through listening to, working with and responding to the needs of people. We feel that if we want to share this experience, the best way to do it is not by going to the rest of the Caribbean or further afield to *talk* about Servol. We have done this in the past, in fact we are doing this quite extensively at the moment. Over the last few years Servol has been asked to visit Malaysia, Kenya, Sweden, India, Colombia and Australia; the months ahead include invitations from Zimbabwe, Jamaica and New Guinea. So we are certainly not against this aspect of experience sharing. But what then? What happens when the workshop is over or the evaluation report handed in? Over and above all this is the very strong feeling that no paper, no film or no description, could ever capture the reality of the existential Servol experience in its actual setting.

### **The Sharing of Experiences**

Seen in this light, the Caribbean Life Centre is simply the concretizing of a growing feeling among members of Servol, that there should be an opportunity for people from other countries to follow up their interest in Servol by a visit to its projects and subsequently, by sharing our experience over a longer period of time. The expression "sharing our experience" is a crucial one which must not be brushed aside or trivialized. It represents our strong conviction, that no human being however successful or enlightened, is qualified to tell another human being in another situation "this is what you should do". The person on the front line is the only one who knows *his* situation and is the only one entitled to develop his own solutions. The most that a sympathetic and slightly more experienced adviser can do, is to share *his* experience with his friend and to relate quite simply and frankly the successes and failures which he has experienced over the period during which he has struggled.

Servol has found this sharing to be of incalculable value. Working in the field of community development is very taxing,

always tiring and tends to leave the community promoter with a perpetual feeling of being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problems and crushed by a sense of not seeing much progress or even hope. This is sheer illusion. In fact, even in most hopeless situations a great deal is going on below the surface but the community promoter is too close to it all, to perceive that he is often trembling on the brink of an exciting break-through. Put such a one in close contact with an organization like Servol which could produce textbooks on subjects like struggle, frustration and weariness, and suddenly the person comes alive. He sees things he can identify with, listens to experiences that are uncannily like his own, is cheered by the recital of the many failures which were preludes to the present flourishing project and leaves with a barrelful of ideas jostling within his mind, so that he can scarcely wait to get back to try out some of them. We in Servol have been privileged to witness one of the most exciting things in community work: the renewal of a dedicated worker who returns to his country to plunge once again into the most exhausting but the most rewarding work in this world of ours.

The residential block of the Caribbean Life Centre will be equipped with meeting rooms and visual aids, and these will provide the space where those who come to us can get together for various sessions organized to suit their needs: opportunities for evaluation of projects and experiences; discussions on the problems they encounter in their own areas; the free exchange of ideas; example of projects which have been effective in other places etc. Eventually, this will lead to developing a number of special courses, and visiting speakers can be brought in to meet the needs and wishes of the groups. Meeting people is always a learning experience, so that both Servol and Trinidad and Tobago, will also be enriched in the process. The above ideas by no means exhaust the possibilities of what can be done at the Caribbean Life Centre. The important thing is that what is offered to the people who come to this centre be tailored to fit their needs; the rest will follow in due course.

### **The Life Centre Charter**

We the staff of the Servol Beetham Life Centre, having spent several years together working for those youth of our society who have been branded drop outs and rejects because of their

inability to fit into the existing educational system, would like to set out our feelings and our intentions as we begin a new decade.

We accept the fact we have been given these youth as our task; rather we rejoice at their presence in our centre, for we have found them sensitive, responsive and grateful for our efforts in their service. In our turn we are grateful for we ourselves are very different people since we joined Servol many years ago; in their own way they have reached us, matured us and brought out qualities in us which we never realized existed.

We accept the fact that our society today seems interested mainly in making the maximum amount of money for the minimum amount of work and that everyone seems intent on making himself as comfortable as possible with little thought of the weak and the oppressed who are trampled on in this mad rush for wealth. We do not point a finger at these people because we recognized in ourselves the seeds of selfishness which produce such behaviour. But we feel compelled to set down in writing the way we will try to behave in the future, as a sign and a pledge to our nation, that life need not be lived in a selfish fashion. There is another way.

We solemnly commit ourselves to the love and service of our students. We recognize that we are the last lifeline thrown out to them which will rescue them from the spiritual destruction resulting from a lack of love and attention. We accept our role as substituting for a broken family or an insensitive and uncaring parent and we will do all we can to heal the emotional wounds in these boys and girls and prepare them for life. We know that this will not be easy. Often the struggle, combined with our own personal problems, makes us fall short of our ideals; but we promise to continue to try.

That is why we also commit ourselves to each other because we recognize that unless we members of staff respect and support each other, the struggle will be lonely and unendurable instead of the burden being shared by many. We know that this will not be easy. We are ordinary men and women and we constantly irritate each other by our faults and mistakes; but we promise to continue to try.

All the above are beautiful words but we realize in dealing with youth, words are not enough, actions speak much louder. That is why we recognized the necessity of our showing them in the actual reality of life, how these sentiments are expressed in concrete action.

That is why each and every one of us, fully and without being pressured, today proclaim our intention of sharing with each other and with the students, whatever financial gain we achieve through our own hard work and industry. We publicly state, that having received what is due to us and what we need for our own personal requirements, that we will voluntarily come to the financial support of any department, any member of staff and any boy or girl who finds themselves in need. We do not wish to work out in detail the way this will be implemented; we leave this to our administrative staff to approach us when they see fit. It suffices to set out the principle in question; the rest will fall into line.

By doing this, we hope that in some small way we can influence the attitudes and ideals of the impressionable youth and even the tired, old society around us. We are Servol and we care. We hope that one day many thousands of people who have passed through this centre will proclaim the same message. Then will our society turn from its mad absorption with money and pleasure to one where the resolve will be never to rest until the basic material and spiritual needs of every single person are filled.

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