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Jones, Helen M.F.

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Original Citation

Jones, Helen M.F. (2014) 'The voluntary organisation forms ... a unique feature of the British way of life': One voluntary organisation's response to the birth of the Youth Service. *Youth and Policy* (113). ISSN 0262-9798

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‘The voluntary organisation forms ... a unique feature of the British way of life’: One voluntary organisation’s response to the birth of the Youth Service

Helen M. F. Jones

Abstract

With the future of the UK’s statutory Youth Service in doubt, this article looks back to the days of its birth. After the Second World War, some people were critical about the idea of direct state involvement and its possible association with the indoctrination of impressionable young people. However, in the West Riding of Yorkshire (WRY), the Education Authority saw the arrival of state provision as signalling an end to the need for voluntary organisations in youth work. The West Riding Association (WRA) and the Leeds Association of Girls’ and Mixed Clubs (LAGC) fought to continue their work with voluntary sector clubs where young people played a leading role in planning and organising their programmes. The Associations’ archives show the struggle leading up to their eventual amalgamation in 1950, in the face of the almost total removal of funding.

Key Words: funding; voluntary sector; association; Youth Service.

IN LIGHT OF the ongoing demise of state sponsored youth work, it seems timely to revisit its birth over sixty years ago. At the time, some voluntary organisations responded rather equivocally and not without suspicion to the arrival of the Youth Service and to the increasing power wielded by the statutory sector. Although the growth in funding for work with young people was welcomed, the involvement of the state was greeted with wariness and youth work became contested territory. The status quo, which had evolved since the nineteenth century, was changed virtually overnight. This article looks at the period immediately after the Second World War through a case study of the situation faced by the West Riding Association of Girls’ and Mixed Clubs (WRA) and the Leeds Association of Girls’ and Mixed Clubs (LAGC).¹

Until the 1920s, youth work was largely the preserve of volunteers. It was financed by fundraising, which took a range of forms. The efforts of youth work pioneers have been documented by writers and editors including Smith (2001), Spence (2004) and Gilchrist et al (for example 2011; 2013) among others. Some of the pioneers were particularly concerned about the welfare of girls working in workshops, factories and mills. Emmeline Pethick, for example, focussed on the plight of the young women employed in dress-making (1898) whilst Lily Montagu was interested in various

issues including girls' employment in sweated labour (Montagu, 1904; Spence, 2004).

In Leeds, as in other cities and towns, small girls' clubs (linked mostly with single churches and chapels) came together in an association which facilitated activities including lectures and competitions. Some girls' club associations were established by women who were concerned with 'the industrial question' (Pethick, 1898). The minutes and Annual Reports of the Leeds Association of Girls' Clubs, however, suggest a preoccupation with competition rules rather than any particular interest in girls' working conditions (Jones, 2011).

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, an increasing number of educated, middle-class young women were looking for outlets for their talents and many engaged in philanthropic activities (see, for example, Gleadle, 2001; Holloway, 2005)². The LAGC was never wealthy but it was able to survive on a combination of donations from local philanthropists and occasional public appeals for specific items, whilst the work was done largely by unpaid volunteers. Only 'expert' teachers of particular skills such as drill were paid by the wealthier clubs. By the 1930s, however, women were entering professional jobs and fewer were seeking unpaid work. Increasingly, youth work was becoming a paid career and qualifications were being devised.

Before and during wartime

From the 1930s, the National Association of Girls' Clubs (NAGC) and other national organisations including the National Association of Boys' Clubs (NABC) began to receive funds from the government which enabled them to make grants available to associations and clubs. This meant state influence started to grow. Grants from the NAGC were welcomed and it became possible to employ paid staff both as face-to-face workers and as administrators. Further support became available from the King George V Jubilee Trust (inaugurated in March 1935). Broadcasting on 12 April 1935, the King spoke of 'admirable' voluntary organisations through which he intended that the Trust's money would be channelled to the country's young people. He explained that the funds would help to 'co-ordinate' existing efforts and extend work into new areas (George V, 1935).

In Yorkshire, the Trust supported the creation of the Yorkshire Association of Girls' Clubs, following the Yorkshire Association of Boys' Clubs (founded in 1933). Leeds was not the only city or town with its own association, but there was no coherence across the country. This prompted the NAGC to create a regional tier system through which they could contact local clubs. LAGC co-operated in the development of the regional organisation and largely continued its work as before. The Yorkshire Association operated as a clearing house for grant applications, which it forwarded, in order of merit, to the NAGC. It concentrated its efforts in the localities which were not covered by LAGC or by the Sheffield Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs.

In 1939 (shortly before the war began), a report commissioned by the King George V Jubilee Trust

reported on the needs of school leavers. Davies notes that it ‘struggled hard to make the case for a stronger state presence which did not undermine the voluntary sector’ (1999: 16). Later in the year, Circular 1486: *In the Service of Youth* established a role for the state in the face of war with the intention of avoiding the ‘social problem’ of widespread delinquency which had arisen during the First World War (Board of Education, 1939). Located in the Board of Education, the remit of *In the Service of Youth* included: ‘offering young people disciplined recreational opportunities consistent with ideas of “freedom” and “liberal democracy”’ (Bradford, 2006: 133). The context for the work was the outbreak of war and the perceived need for young people to become part of the nation’s war effort in military or civilian terms. The following year the Board of Education published Circular 1516: *The Challenge of Youth* (1940). It identified the need for ‘social facilities, physical recreation and continued education’ (Davies, 1999: 20). The two circulars are regarded as forming the foundation of the Youth Service, although a series of other circulars were issued during the early years of the war (for further details see Bradford, 2006). Circular 1516 was based on the premise of statutory and voluntary youth provision co-existing (Davies, 1999: 20). During the 1930s, some travellers to Germany had been impressed with the compulsory Hitler Jugend but the outbreak of war saw greater emphasis on the significance of both voluntary engagement and voluntary effort and concomitant reluctance to imitate totalitarian states.

In response to Circular 1516, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) began to establish structures to facilitate their work with young people. Amongst these was the West Riding of Yorkshire which created its County Youth Committee in February 1940. With the County Council as an umbrella organisation, West Yorkshire’s town councils also set up structures. In 1941, to mirror the statutory structure, the Yorkshire Association of Girls’ and Mixed Clubs disaggregated and, reflecting local government regions, the West Riding Association of Girls’ Clubs and Mixed Clubs (WRA) was created. Wartime travel difficulties, the black-out, children and young people’s evacuation and the work caused by the billeting of soldiers all helped to make the administration of a single organisation, covering a county stretching from Middlesbrough to Sheffield and Hull to Sedbergh, impossible. Even on its own, the West Riding stretched from Sedbergh in the north-west, (Sedbergh is now in Cumbria) to Sheffield (now part of South Yorkshire), an area of over six thousand square kilometres. It included several large, mainly industrial, cities and numerous towns as well as a vast number of villages. The cities had their own councils whilst the County Council was responsible for the rest of the county. By this time, girls’ and mixed clubs’ monies came from a combination of fundraising (holding dances, for example) and grants from the Ministry of Education, channelled via the NAGC.

Throughout the war, the voluntary sector continued to receive funding channelled through their national bodies whilst LEAs also received funds from the Ministry of Education. Statutory clubs were often able to meet in schools and other premises coming under the aegis of local authorities whilst voluntary clubs generally had easier access to church halls. Immediately after the war, the West Riding Education Authority produced a report in which the situation during the war was

described. Its Youth Service had expanded rapidly ‘primarily to deal with problems peculiar to war conditions’. The report stated:

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

The fact that standards in statutory clubs were open to question compares markedly with the situation in clubs affiliated to the WRA. For example, during November 1945, Shepley Youth Club near Huddersfield was disaffiliated from the WRA because ‘the Committee were not satisfied that the Club fulfilled the standards and conditions of affiliation’ (WRA, 1945d). In particular, the WRA required its clubs to show that they had effective Members’ Committees or, where necessary, clubs were supported in developing them.

The birth of the Service of Youth

A fundamental change was made during 1945-6 when central government, through the Ministry of Education, started to direct funds to local authorities and the statutory Youth Service was born. The Ministry intended LEAs to develop Youth Services and also to provide grants to established voluntary bodies which hitherto had received funds via their national bodies. As a WRA document later explained, ‘Formerly the Ministry of Education made grants available to aid the work of Voluntary Youth Organisations, but it is now their policy that such grants shall be the responsibility of Local Education Authorities, and many Authorities make substantial grants’ (WRA, 1947c). This transferred the responsibility for identifying local priorities to local authorities and the impact on long-standing voluntary organisations could be profound. In some areas, local authorities built good relationships with existing voluntary organisations but in the West Riding this was not the case and a more difficult situation emerged. In April 1945, the WRA learned that West Riding County Council had ‘declined to grant-aid the work of the Association’ (WRA, 1945a). It subsequently transpired that club leaders’ salaries could be paid through grant aid but that the WRA organiser’s salary together with administrative and office costs could not be funded (WRA, 1945b). The West Riding Education Committee allocated £25,000 to its ‘Youth Activities’ for 1945-6 (WRY, 1945). Across the voluntary sector, only the West Riding Federation of Young Farmers’ Clubs received any funding for the year. The decision by the County Council to take responsibility for all youth work happened abruptly and appears to have come as a shock both locally and nationally. WRA minutes record that ‘the National Association wished to know the reason [...] and to take up the matter with the Ministry of Education’ (WRA, 1945a). Probably presuming that either there had been an error, or that it would be possible to reach an accommodation, the NAGC made a grant

themselves. As a result, the WRA's income for 1945-6 was comparable with the income for the previous year: around 60% came from the NAGC. The rest came through subscriptions, donations and affiliation fees.

LAGC was facing similar difficulties in securing funding from the West Riding Education Authority and its constituent LEAs. The two associations agreed to consider the development of future joint policy, bearing in mind the difficulty they were facing in securing grant aid from local authorities and also the reduction in finance to the NAGC from the Ministry. In November 1945, representatives of both associations and Sheffield Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs met with six LEA area youth officers and also workers from major youth clubs across the West Riding to discuss how the statutory and voluntary organisations should work together (WRA, 1945b). Miss Harford travelled from London, representing the NAGC. She gave an overview of the initiatives being taken by national headquarters including 'their realisation of the need for research work'. She described the 'evolution' of arrangements where voluntary organisations 'could relieve the LEA of certain work and they in turn give material assistance' although she was clearly mindful of the situation in the West Riding. Indeed, she described the situation as 'very peculiar'. This she attributed in part to its 'many strong County Boroughs' (WRA, 1945c). The WRA and LAGC were probably hoping to hear good news about a breakthrough in terms of future funding but sadly this was not forthcoming. The NAGC was powerless to overturn the West Riding Council's decision. Rather, Miss Harford posed a series of questions to the meeting including 'How could the Statutory and Voluntary Organisations work together for best results?' She asked, on the one hand, whether there was a need for the NAGC but on the other hand whether there was a need for Associations for the County Boroughs which, unlike Leeds, had no associations of their own. There was logic to the latter suggestion: a network of associations which mirrored the county boroughs might have had potential to establish local priorities and divide responsibilities along clearly delineated lines. The minutes record, 'There was a full discussion ... and finally it was resolved [to form] a small committee' (WRA, 1945c). Subsequently, the committee did not recommend the creation of numerous small associations.

In the face of the abrupt removal of funding, it appears that initially both associations believed that policy would change and the Education Authority would rethink its decision, coming into line with other authorities around the country. The following year, the WRA's Annual Report restated their understanding of the situation:

Although the policy of the Ministry is partnership between the Statutory Local Authorities and Voluntary Organisations in the Service of Youth, the West Riding Education Authority considers that this Service can be carried out by its own machinery and its own staff alone so far as clubs are concerned, and is not prepared to grant aid the administrative expenses of a voluntary body, such as ours. (WRA, 1947c).

The payment of face-to-face workers would be undertaken by local authorities but the WRA’s network of organisers and infrastructure would not be supported. Overall control of the West Riding County Council frequently shifted between political parties and there was possibly hope that a change would herald a shift in approach to voluntary organisations.

The West Riding of Yorkshire

The WRA and LAGC’s difficulties in securing funding, and the West Riding County Council’s antipathy towards voluntary organisations, appear to have originated with Councillor Walter Hyman, Chairman of the Education Authority. Cook describes Hyman as a ‘powerful and sometimes controversial figure’ who was ‘a dominant force on the many committees he chaired’ (2000: 89). A Labour Party councillor, he had his own vision which he carried through with zeal and tenacity. His vision did not include the voluntary sector, except as a marginal group of volunteers making no demands on state finance. In 1967, Hyman’s obituary quoted Sir Alec Clegg (Chief Education Officer to the West Riding 1945-74) who described a man who was ‘quite reckless in his disregard of the way of peace and compromise’. Despite the normally quasi-hagiographic nature of obituaries, Clegg added, ‘If he had had more conciliation in his makeup and an ability to disguise his contempt of stupidity and pretence he might well have distinguished himself as much in the national educational field as he did in the West Riding’ (N.K., 1967). Whether Hyman would have wished to enter a wider stage is a moot point. A Yorkshire man who proposed the amalgamation of Yorkshire’s three Ridings and creation of a provincial tier of government (N.K., 1967), Hyman probably saw Yorkshire as infinitely more significant than England. Nationally, this was an era when belief in the desirability of state provision was ascendant. During the war, people had sacrificed much for the state and now, in return, the state should take responsibility for welfare and other aspects of life. As Kynaston states, ‘the British people, in return for all their sufferings in a noble cause, deserved a new start after the war’ (2007: 22). For Hyman, the WRA epitomised an older, obsolete world before the creation of the state’s ‘cradle to grave’ care.

Despite the financial situation, the Association continued to support its members and to encourage young people’s involvement in the management of their clubs to an increasingly sophisticated extent. During 1946, for example, the Executive Committee heard a report from The Mixed Clubs’ Members’ and Leaders’ Conferences. Members’ Committees believed that they ‘should have more say in Programs [sic], the function of Leaders being to provide new ideas and to carry out the program desired by the Members’. Members wanted training in ‘program planning’ and teaching so they could take craft classes (WRA, 1946b). The WRA and LAGC Annual Reports provide overviews of the wide range of activities available in clubs including arts, crafts, sports and hobbies. Members were seen as frequently having tedious, repetitive jobs which could be assuaged by interesting club programmes, planned and organised by themselves.

During 1946, the matter of finance occurred less frequently in the minutes but, in September, the

WRA learned that the County Council had rejected its application towards office and administration costs. A letter from Mr Clegg was accepted as the final word for 1946 but the 'long and arduous fight' would be taken up again the following year (WRA, 1946b). In early 1947 it was agreed to defer applying for grant aid to LEAs until the West Riding Council had considered the Yorkshire Association of Boys' Clubs (YABC)'s application (WRA, 1947a). The rationale for this apparently gallant behaviour is unclear and YABC did not enjoy any greater success.

The ongoing culture of mutual suspicion between the WRA and LEA is shown in an account from March 1947 when the Association came into direct territorial conflict with the local Youth Officer and a Director of Education. During 1947, the West Riding Council was re-organising its Youth Service and required all their youth clubs to re-register. Registered groups were required to meet certain standards including having 'an adult management committee' (West Riding County Council, 1948). The WRA was informed that local education committees were the *de facto* management committees of all civic youth clubs. Thus any club seeking support from the LEA had to accept the LEA in management terms. In Huddersfield, the Leader of Lockwood Youth Centre had affiliated to the WRA 'improperly'. The Youth Officer and Director of Education:

... expressed the view that the Association had little to offer to the Civic Youth Clubs. The [WRA] secretary pointed out the desirability of co-operation and the advantages of affiliation. The officers observed that the Education Committee provides training courses and advisory service. They have no Members' Councils, and are not enamoured of these. (WRA, 1947b).

The Education Committee had not previously considered the question of whether civic youth clubs might affiliate to the WRA, but they had no objection to other clubs affiliating. The Director of Education provided the WRA secretary with a list of local clubs 'other than civic' (WRA, 1947b). This incident shows the different value bases emerging. A gulf was widening between clubs with paid leaders who were funded by the Council and those remaining totally dependent on volunteers and fundraising, where members played a significant role in management. This signified a new difficulty in reaching a *modus vivendi* within the sector in the West Riding. Contrary views on the value of Members' Councils were highlighted increasingly.

Clubs' Members' Committees sent representatives to regional Members' Councils: the WRA supported a considerable bureaucracy. In 1947, the WRA's Annual Report outlined the Association's strength of feeling about the significance of Members' Councils which 'consist of two representatives from each club, and... consider a wide range of subjects'. The members 'gain valuable experience in Committee work which will prove very useful in later life, and they can represent the views of their club, and by social activities they help generally to cement the life of the individual clubs into the life of the Association' (1947c). Clubs were represented on regional Members' Councils which the WRA funded 'almost' as sub-committees. Half their expenses would

be paid. It was felt that 'such expenditure would carry weight with LEAs in consideration of grant aid' (WRA, 1947a).

Clearly, Association staff invested time and resources in supporting and nurturing Members' Councils. The fact that the Youth Officer and Education Officer were 'not enamoured' of young people's direct involvement in managing clubs presaged the present when members have little input in their own provision while workers are tasked with encouraging and fostering participation. Associations had long supported the idea of members' direct involvement: even early girls' work pioneers had regarded the matter as significant. Meanwhile LEAs were attempting to establish 'Junior Youth Councils'. The WRA secretary had investigated the question of whether they overlapped with Members' Councils and ascertained from the County Council Youth Officer that 'Junior Youth Councils were mostly rather defunct at present, and their resuscitation will not be tackled yet' (WRA, 1947b).

It is worth noting that Association minutes suggest that the regional Members' Councils were not necessarily the thriving bodies suggested to the outside world. It was politic to build up their significance where they had potential to be a trump card in negotiations with the County Council. During early 1947, Wakefield, Bradford, Barnsley and Harrogate Members' Councils had met with varying success, due to bad weather – the winter of 1946-7 was particularly harsh (WRA, 1947a). Two years later the Organising Secretary reported:

There are now two councils functioning in the West Riding: Harrogate and District which is the best of these and reasonably well attended, Bradford and Area, which needs a considerable amount of 'nursing' and help. I suggest that the West Riding needs two more... one in Skipton and one in Wakefield, where I understand there was one in the past but it is now absolutely dead. (Sinnamon, 1949: 4).

It was clear that Members' Councils required a considerable amount of support. It appears that the LEA and county councillors held somewhat divergent views on the merit of encouraging the active involvement of members in the running of clubs.

A significant meeting

Minutes of the joint meeting of the two girls' and mixed clubs associations' executive committees in the autumn of 1947 record that Mrs G. Graham (the Chairman of the WRA) 'observed that Voluntary Organisations are fighting for their life in the West Riding ... She thought we must look for things that are not done by the L.E.A. and make them our function' (WRA, 1947d). This recommendation was made almost two years after Miss Harford had made a similar suggestion. Mrs Graham also recommended amalgamation of the two associations.

Later the same month, Mrs Graham met with County Councillor Walter Hyman, Chairman of the West Riding Education Authority, the man who chaired the committee whose decisions had led to the Association’s loss of funding. She appears to have been motivated by recent discussions concerning the need to explore the things not undertaken by the LEA. Mrs Graham sought the meeting of her own volition to discuss how ‘his Youth Scheme’, as she termed it in rather disparaging terms, fitted with the WRA. There is no known account of Councillor Hyman’s perspective on the meeting. He possibly regarded the period where the Ministry of Education funded voluntary organisations to work with young people as a period of transition from youth work’s early days, where no workers were paid, to the modern era where youth work was an aspect of the welfare state’s ‘cradle to grave’ provision.

By 1947, County Councillor Hyman had been chairing the Education Committee for ten years. Control in the West Riding moved between Labour and the Conservatives with regularity but the Education Committee’s vision remained consistent as the dominant party provided the chair and the opposition, the deputy chair. It is almost certain that, before their meeting, Mrs Graham already knew the Councillor, either in person or by repute.

Hyman was driven by personal as well as philanthropic motives and his refusal to compromise did not always encourage friendship. However, he has been described as having a genuine passion for education, a vigorous intellect, a readiness for unlimited burdens and the tenacity to ensure his ideas were accomplished. (Cook, 2000: 90).

The breadth of the County Council Education Committee’s responsibilities is truly impressive when viewed with the benefit of hindsight: they extended from the establishment of a permanent string quartet to the provision of library services in hospitals (WRY, 1947).

Mrs Graham subsequently circulated notes of her meeting with Councillor Hyman, which appears to have been confrontational at times. Whether the account was based on contemporaneous notes taken by herself or an aide, or whether she wrote her own account immediately *post facto*, is not known but either way, it seems to demonstrate diametrically opposed, somewhat combative, positions. Councillor Hyman represented the new state funded service which formed part of the new welfare state and advocated a monopoly in funding terms whilst Mrs Graham was in favour of a plural system where the voluntary clubs received state support.

At the outset, Councillor Hyman assumed Mrs Graham wished to discuss grants but she emphasised that she wanted to discuss policy. He responded that, provided the Association did not ask for grants, they could exist ‘just as much or as little as [they] liked, just as long as [they] had voluntary workers who wanted to spend their time on such things’ (Graham, 1947). Mrs Graham’s style of writing suggests the tone in which the discussion took place. She observed that Councillor Hyman believed the days of voluntary clubs had ended ‘because a really progressive LEA should have

taken all their work over'. Hence, he was not concerned over the continued existence of voluntary youth clubs provided they did not ask for any funds and could survive through the involvement of voluntary workers and fundraising.

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

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

She expanded on her theme by talking about training:

I pointed out that many of his personnel were NABC trained. He agreed that if we thought out any kind of training that was not being provided already and for which there was a demand he would be interested and if we wanted money we should ask for it and it would receive every consideration. (Graham, 1947).

Apparently Alderman Hyman was 'quite impressed' by the Members' Councils and explained that his own workers' attempts at encouraging members' participation had not met with success. Together with holidays (the WRA and LAGC had a long history of organising residentials both in the UK and mainland Europe) the idea of Members' Councils was the only other aspect of the Association's work with young people which impressed Hyman. He did not see the role of the national organisation immediately but 'consented to give some thought to' the advantages which 'a County cannot offer simply because it is not a National Body' (ibid).

Mrs Graham finally turned her attention to the idea that 'the proper place for a Youth Club is as part of a Community Centre'. This particular angle is not recorded as having been discussed during any of the executive committee's debates. She said she believed that youth centres needed to have 'parent bodies' just as 'the real unit of society is the family not a collection of orphans' (Graham, 1947). Hence, until sufficient community centres had been constructed, churches and chapels would have to suffice. Councillor Hyman disagreed on the grounds that religious bodies saw their work with young people as essentially missionary or evangelical and they sought only to recruit members. County Council Education Committee minutes show attempts were made to purchase secular premises for use as community centres (WRY, 1947). Mrs Graham does not record whether she challenged the notion that religious bodies were partisan. She concluded her notes by observing that the Association should stop attempting to get funding for administration but should seek a grant for supporting Members' Councils; 'I am bound to say that I cannot see why an authority which proposes to administer a comprehensive scheme itself should be expected

to subsidise another body to do the same work' (Graham, 1947). Whilst her intentions are not clearly recorded, it is possible that Graham met Hyman because she believed she might establish a good working relationship between the WRA and the County Council. However, this was not possible because the county councillor believed that the days of voluntary clubs receiving grant aid from the state were over.

Although Mrs Graham stated that she wished to discuss 'policy' rather than funding, she does not mention referring to the 1944 Education Act or Circulars 1486 and 1516. Rather, she selected the aspects of the Association's work which she felt were not being appropriately funded or valued. She might also have raised the question of the underpinning values but her record does not indicate that she chose to do so. The question of whether all paid work with young people should be within the state's aegis was central. Whilst many local authorities chose to provide voluntary organisations with funding comparable to that which they had received hitherto from the Board of Education via the NAGC, the West Riding made a different choice. Although it could be surmised that the personality of Councillor Hyman was a factor, the public confusion emanating from the dual associations may have contributed. For Mrs Graham, the Association's work was paramount. For Alderman Hyman, the Association's work is likely to have been an essentially middle-class concern of marginal interest. For him, the Association brought together girls' and mixed clubs, which were largely set up, and housed, by churches and chapels. As noted, he was suspicious about their underlying motives. The Association is never mentioned in published minutes of the County Council Education Committee.

A financial crisis

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

In June 1948, (eight months after her meeting with Hyman) Mrs Graham wrote to advise the NAGC that the WRA had called an Extraordinary General Meeting with a view to dissolving the Association. She gave a typically vivid picture of the situation: 'for so long we in the West Riding have been struggling against veiled and active opposition from the LEA and our opposite numbers Yorkshire Association of Boys' Clubs'. She also recorded that WRA felt unsupported by the NAGC who had 'failed to appreciate the position' (Graham, 1948). The financial situation indeed was dire but perhaps Mrs Graham was attempting to call the Alderman Hyman's bluff. The Association represented and supported a large number of clubs, many of which were beyond the West Riding Education Authority's capacity to support. The WRA decided against winding itself up.

Later in 1948, the West Riding Education Authority produced its 'Scheme of Further Education, The Service of Youth, Community Centres and Village Halls'. Over halfway through, squeezed in at the end of a page, is the following point, 'The Authority do not [...] approve grants-in-aid towards local administration costs of national Boys' and Girls' Club organisations. Having themselves set up an adequate organisation they do not wish to encourage duplication of effort' (West Riding Education Authority Policy Subcommittee, 1948). Three years after establishing its Youth Service, the County Council clearly established its view that the voluntary sector was entirely unnecessary, if not actually undesirable. State provision had superseded voluntary or charitable activity in the fields of health and social services and the same applied to youth organisations.

By September, the West Riding Association was effectively bankrupt, but the LAGC and WRA limped on and did not amalgamate until early 1950. The need to join together was clear but the two organisations differed more than might be anticipated in terms of expectations and outlook. Minutes record ongoing bickering over staffing and priorities. However the 1950-51 Annual Report stated that the amalgamation 'long sought by both Associations on economy grounds [was] delayed through what at one time appeared to be the irreconcilable needs and demands of each Association'. Once effected, 'the advantages ... have far outweighed [the] disadvantages' (WRA, 1951).

Despite the amalgamation and resultant reduction in overheads, in 1951 the WRA reported ongoing financial struggle. Power had shifted away from Labour for the period 1949-52 so Alderman Hyman no longer exercised power but the Council still declined to provide direct grants. This left voluntary organisations to continue to 'rely on the goodwill and generosity of individuals' (WRA, 1951). Financial struggles notwithstanding, the Association's Annual Report for 1950-51 shows determination:

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

The report looked back over the decade since the publication of Circular 1486, which 'revolutionised' youth work. The increased provision through Local Education Authorities was 'necessary and is welcomed' but the continued existence of voluntary organisations was identified as a vital buffer in ensuring that youth work would not be swallowed into a system of state indoctrination. The report's sense of injustice is palpable as it continues: 'The fact that Local Authorities have accepted this extra responsibility has unfortunately led to a belief by some that the voluntary organisation has outlived its usefulness. Nothing can be further from the truth.' With scarcely veiled criticism

of the LEA, the report expanded on its philosophy of youth work:

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

Valuing 'association' above focus on individual development is a contest still being played out in youth work sixty years later. In a slightly different tone, the report acknowledged the 'excellent' work being done by the statutory Youth Service. They advocated 'co-operation and not competition' between statutory and voluntary organisations (WRA, 1951). At grassroots level, the WRA was working increasingly harmoniously with statutory clubs.

By the financial year 1952-3, the WRA's annual turnover had grown by a quarter whilst the contribution from the NAGC had declined by half. The NAGC contributed 60% of the WRA's income in 1944-5 but this had declined to only 20% eight years later. At no time did the West Riding County Council provide any grant aid to the Association. The increase in income came from more effective fundraising on WRA's behalf. The newly amalgamated Association gradually grew in confidence as it became more independent and found a way to survive and even thrive in the new environment. In 1953, the Annual Report's cover strap-line was 'a year of decision' which it asserted reflected the organisation's own 'growing pains'. The report added that 'The main points about youth clubs are, first that membership is entirely voluntary, and second, that they are largely what young people want them to be' (WRA, 1953). The following year, the cover carried the message, 'a year of encouragement'. The financial situation was described as 'greatly strengthened' and the situation was 'a little more secure'. Impressively, membership of affiliated clubs was nearly 3500 young people across the region (WRA, 1954).

Conclusion

The period immediately following the Second World War saw the birth of the Welfare State but also, as a direct outcome, a major threat to the future of voluntary organisations' capacity to undertake youth work across the West Riding. Ultimately, the organisations' work survived largely due to more effective fundraising from the general public. Funding slipped away from the WRA and LAGC's grasp to an extent unequalled until the current reduction in funding for work with young people. At the time, the WRA and LAGC amalgamated under the WRA title thus reducing overheads and, in the twenty first century, The Youth Association traces its origins directly to them. The values of voluntarism, informal education and association remained a central tenet and throughout the 1950s and 60s affiliated groups continued to value the national dimension, the

networking opportunities and the provision of foreign exchanges and travel. Over the subsequent period, the Association began to run youth programmes in its own right, in addition to maintaining services to its many affiliates.

The scant concern for young people's participation shown by the statutory Youth Service in the early days appears to have set the pattern for subsequent generations. As WRA found, Members' Committees and Councils required support and determination from staff but were an important aspect of clubs' work. Alderman Hyman showed interest in the concept but his staff were clearly equivocal and LEA clubs did not establish an expectation of participation.

Misgivings concerning the notion of direct state involvement in youth provision sixty years ago, and fears that a statutory service was too close to one where participation was compulsory, largely have been forgotten. Visionary belief in the potential of a generous range of cradle-to-grave state provision was pitted against traditional adherence to voluntary provision. At a time of anger about the scale of financial cuts, and nostalgia for the days of a state funded Youth Service, it is salutary to find that its birth was met with suspicion from some of those involved in youth work.

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Notes

- 1 Shortened abbreviations have been used. Hence, WRA has been used rather than WRAGMC and LAGC rather than LAGCMC.
- 2 In Leeds, early volunteers included several members of the prosperous Middleton and Lupton families (the great grandmother and great great aunts of the Duchess of Cambridge née Catherine

