

**THE DECLARATION
OF
THE 1981
YOUTH PRESIDUM**

The Institute of Cultural Affairs
International Training Center
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PROLOGUE

The Second Annual Youth Presidium was held in February of 1981, in Chicago. People came together from across the continent to discuss the state of the Youth Revolution, to look at trends and new directions, and to discern the role of youth in society. By meeting with other youth in this context we more clearly understood the significance of what we are doing in a whole new way.

During the course of the Presidium we brought forth ideas and images through workshops, brainstorming and plenaries. The data for the Presidium was generated from information from a questionnaire sent to individuals who had recently returned from overseas, from articles on youth which were studied during the first workshop, and from the brainstorming which took place throughout the Presidium. From the data collected, five arenas of concern of youth today emerged: 1) Collapse of Family Structures, 2) Economic Stability, 3) Education for Vocation, 4) Rites of Passage, and 5) Individual Engagement in Society. Fifteen trends were identified and four fundamental responses to each arena were consensed upon.

One thing that will be remembered is that there is a real power in being individuals, yet working corporately. As one of our rituals quoted:

"If I am not for myself,
who will be for me?
And if I am only for myself,
what am I?
And if not now, when?"

The Collapse of Family Structures

The first arena of major concern, The Collapse of Family Structures, revealed three underlying questions:

1. What causes divorce, and how can we deal with it effectively as a family?
2. How can one effectively deal with runaways and their problems?
3. How do we define the roles of the family to effectively deal with lack of understanding?

The issues raised by these questions disclosed the present positive and negative trends:

1. Independence of youth is evidenced by deciding to be responsible,
2. Decision making is taking a new direction within families illustrated by decisions being made by the whole family,
3. The realization by youth that they are responsible for their families is demonstrated by youth's interest in the family's well-being, such as caring for siblings, giving financial support, etc.,
4. The lack of parental guidance is evidenced by juvenile delinquency,
5. Poor communication between parents and children shows up as the uncertainty of youth in many social situations, and
6. The absence of new family structures results in the lack of models for single parent families, homosexual parent families, etc.

In group discussions concerning the Collapse of Family Structures, four essential elements emerged:

1. That youth take more interest in their family's well-being,
2. That families define each member's role,
3. That families acknowledge the importance of youth's role and delegate appropriate responsibilities, and
4. That youth take more serious relationships to the future.

It was illuminated that without these elements, Family Structures become the victim of counterproductive trends in society which preclude creative responses to the future. Building upon the advantages of this awareness, youth are in a position to exercise the following viable options: more interest in family's well-being, deciding that they are responsible, and looking toward and caring for the future.

Economic Stability

The second arena of major concern, Economic Stability, revealed three underlying questions:

1. What are some goals for youth, other than just making money?
2. What are alternative lifestyles, other than the bourgeois life?
3. Why do we value the acquiring of materialistic goods more than we value other individual achievements?

The issues raised by these questions disclosed the present positive and negative trends:

1. Youth are looking for more meaning in work, as evidenced by their joining groups such as Junior Achievement and CETA.
2. Youth are working to decrease the gap between the 15% of those who control the economic resources of the world, and the 85% who have no economic security, as seen by youth making efforts to benefit the 85%.
3. Youth are looking for human values other than economic security, as evidenced by choosing their vocations out of interest, rather than pay.
4. People are obsessed with the desire for security by working at monotonous jobs for long hours.
5. People are escaping the issues of reality by acquiring more and more things.
6. People are judging others by their symbols of status, as evidenced by buying expensive, trendy products, such as designer jeans.

In group discussions concerning the future of Economic Stability, four essential elements emerged:

1. Making sure that you have a source of income for the necessities of life, and being intentional in using that income, such as budgeting, saving for college expenses, etc.,
2. Acquiring an education so that you have adequate skills for making a living,
3. Taking a relationship toward your job, so that you can function as an effective person in your job, and
4. Becoming informed of the way our economy operates, and of how it affects the rest of society.

It was illuminated that without these elements, Economic Stability becomes the victim of counterproductive trends in society which precludes creative responses to the future. Building upon the advantage of this awareness, youth are in a position to exercise the following viable options: joining an economic program that would hold meaning for them, such as Junior Achievement, joining a work experience program, such as getting school credit for work, and creating their own job by using their skills and making a profit.

Education for Vocation

The third arena of major concern, Education for Vocation, revealed three underlying questions:

1. What is the need for schooling? How much should be required?
2. What sort of education is appropriate? At what age should it begin?
3. How much knowledge and experience does a person need to create a model for successfully deciding a vocation?

The issues raised by these questions disclosed the present positive and negative trends:

1. Educators are trying to reach youth in a variety of ways as evidenced by the new YWCA programs on practical education and awareness.
2. Preschool programs that go beyond mere babysitting are evidenced by daycare centers geared to total child development.
3. The availability of broad-based vocational courses is illustrated by modern vocational programs which cater to all ages and are held both during the day and evening.
4. The negative attitude toward "school, why bother?" posture is revealed by the high drop-out rate.
5. The lack of awareness of the existence of resource material and a method for its use is evidenced by media material being accessible to most schools while the administration does not communicate its importance to new students.
6. Job market criteria for course study is evidenced by schools cutting cultural programs for budget reasons, which discourages the pursuit of artistic desires.

In group discussion, concerning the future of Education for Vocation four essential elements emerged:

1. A way to say, "What is the need for education,"
2. Discovery-based education spanning cultural and global experiences,
3. Studies that focus on the past and present, but with more emphasis on the future, and
4. Methods for developing individual potential.

It was illuminated that without these elements Education for Vocation becomes the victim of counterproductive trends in society which preclude creative responses to the future. Building upon the advantages of this awareness, youth are in a position to exercise the following viable options: distribute booklets on education to students, post charts explaining the job market situations, and attend youth meetings (like the Presidium) relative to vocation.

Rites of Passage

The fourth arena of major concern, Rites of Passage, revealed three underlying questions:

1. At what times in one's life would transitions occur?
2. What happens between transition points?
3. How do you enable people to make it through these transitions?

The issues raised by these questions disclosed the present positive and negative trends:

1. The expression of feeling through positive action as demonstrated by peaceful student rallies,
2. The search for further knowledge as evidenced by college education,
3. The establishment of counseling services as a way of guiding individuals pointed to by school and career counseling,
4. The existence of fixed transition points exemplified by the requirement of 18 year olds registering for the draft,
5. The copping out of various situations, witnessed by the increasing rate of drop-outs, and
6. The pushing of individuals into transitions before they are "prepared" evidenced by occasional indecision and stress.

In group discussions concerning the future of Rites of Passage four elements emerged:

1. Discovering oneself through indepth life reflection,
2. Discerning one's goals through vocational decisions,
3. Re-establishing one's outlook through intentional solitary and corporate experiences, and
4. Experimenting with a total change in one's situation in order to grasp its significance.

It was illuminated that without these elements, Rites of Passage become the victim of counterproductive trends in society which preclude creative options for the future. Building upon the advantage of this awareness, youth are in a position to exercise the following viable options for individual engagement in society: participating in a high school adventure, where the individual experiences both the solitary and corporate aspects of society, discerning one's life story by asking, "what am I going to do with my life?", and creating a commonality in age requirements in such areas as driving and drinking.

Individual Engagement in Society

The fifth arena of major concern, Individual Engagement in Society, revealed three underlying questions:

1. What are the forms in which youth can significantly engage in society?
2. How does one individual actually make a difference?
3. How does one hold the tension between individual freedom and corporate obligations?

The issues raised by these questions disclosed the present positive and negative trends:

1. Traditionally negative groups doing positive things, like the Guardian Angels who are patrolling the New York City subways,
2. Exploring new avenues of expression such as returning to the arts,
3. Less rigid cliques, as illustrated by broad-based activities,
4. Greater levels of rebellion and violence, as demonstrated by higher juvenile crime rates,
5. Materialistic values, as evidenced by youth getting trained for paying jobs that do not really interest them, and
6. Decreasing interest in political engagement, as witnessed by the decrease in the percentage of young adults at the polls.

In group discussions concerning the future of Individual Engagement in Society, four essential elements emerged:

1. Corporate consensus within a group,
2. Vocational decisions based on societal necessity,
3. Courage to be one's self in the midst of societal pressure,
4. Structures that enable self-expenditure and growth.

It was illuminated that without these elements, Individual Engagement in Society becomes the victim of counterproductive trends in society which preclude creative responses to the future. Building upon the advantage of this awareness, youth are in a position to exercise the following viable options: getting involved in non-destructive recreation, working in existing structures with the entire community, and pushing for more educational options.

EPILOGUE

We the youth, representing youth from across North America, have gathered to discern where we are headed in the coming decade, in order to provide all youth with a vision of where we can creatively affect society. The pain and frustration we experience today is in trying to enact our care, to be recognized as responsible members of society, and to discover our personal vocations. Youth are meeting these challenges by becoming active in community groups and by stating their opinions on such issues as presidential elections, tax cuts and abortion.

The journey of youth over the past three decades began with a defiant attitude toward established society, moved to complacency and self-absorption in the '70s, and is transiting toward the realization of corporate power. This corporate power is hidden within us and now is the time to see it creatively engaged, as demonstrated by the Guardian Angels group in New York City who help make the subways safer and as stated by Robert F. Kennedy:

Our answer is to rely on youth.
It is a revolutionary world we live in
And this generation at home and
around the world have had thrust upon it
a greater burden of responsibility
than any generation that has ever lived.