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The missing future: Colombian youth

*Rodrigo Parra Sandoval**

The exhaustion of the modernization model, the acute crisis affecting the family and the shortcomings of political and educational institutions place Colombian young people in a state of isolation characterized, in the author's view, by few opportunities of political participation, a future of unemployment or underemployment, poor-quality education which inspires no enthusiasm and guarantees neither employment or social mobility, and a society without a clear model of a future with a place in it for young people. Young people are also faced with a chaos of values generated not only by the very rapid succession of three social situations (rural society, modern society and model-less society) but also by the emergence of forms of organization connected with that succession, such as the black economy, the economic organization of drug-trafficking or dependence on drugs, corruption in the world of finance and administration, and the consumerist visions offered by the mass communication media.

This produces a feeling of economic and cultural exclusion, a devaluation of the concept of youth derived from the modernization model, and a dangerous proximity to a situation of social breakdown. The fact that these circumstances make it difficult to conceive of a personal or group future and plan a career is what constitutes the missing future of today's youth,

The author analyses these general features in greater detail in three areas: work, political participation and migration.

*With the collaboration of Bernardo Jaramillo. The author is a consultant to iCLAC's Social Development Division. This is a summary and updated version of the book of the same title published by the author in Bogotá in 1985.

Youth and development

From the sociological standpoint, youth is seen as a variable phenomenon which can exist, not exist, or take different forms, as if it was a society, or different aspects of the same society, or different groups within a society at a given moment. Youth is a cultural concept of historical origin which can have a high and a low point. In the case of Colombia, the concept of youth is of fairly recent origin, concurrent with other concepts related to the form of urban industrial development, such as "modernization" or "social mobility", "urbanism", "marginality", "enterprise" or "entrepreneur". All these concepts had the same historical genesis and have developed along similar lines, although with their own peculiar characteristics.

The concept of youth derived from the urban industrial model of development is based on a transformation of the existing relationships between the family and work as they affect the process of socialization. This transformation is produced when socialization is entrusted to an education system conceived as a means of training manpower for the new model of urban life, for jobs which require a certain degree of specialized secondary qualifications, or for higher posts requiring university qualifications. In the years immediately preceding the institution of the modernization model, education was restricted to a very small group, and even primary education was extremely limited: for example, in 1940 in Colombia there were only 2 990 university students; in 1980 180 000 students graduated from higher education.

Before the adoption of the modernization model, the relationship between the family and work was virtually direct for the majority of Colombians: people worked in the family or moved on from the family to work without intermediate stages. This meant that youth, if it existed, was very short and only very small groups enjoyed an extensive and significant intermediate period. This situation changed with the expansion of education and the

programmes of educational democratization. However, the expansion of schooling and the consequent redistribution of youth did not affect all the groups equally: for most of the peasant groups youth could end at the age of 10, when the child moved on from the family and few years of school to work, but for urban middle- and upper-class groups youth could easily last until the age of 20 or 25.

These changes are associated both with the rapid expansion of the modernization model and with its short duration (about two and a half decades), as well as with its early decline. Colombia's modernization process has been extremely rapid, and although it has begun to lose momentum very quickly, it has produced very significant changes and a state of confusion about a suddenly uncertain future. It must be remembered that Colombia, a rural society organized on the basis of the low-productivity farm, with an embryonic manufacturing industry, with 71% of its population living in rural areas and with 87% in towns of less than 200 000 inhabitants in 1938, switched to an urban economy with a high proportion of tertiary employment and 61% of its population living in towns in 1973, while the number of inhabitants tripled in those 35 years: from 8.7 to 25.5 million.

Apart from the problems of the differential distribution of young people among groups, especially between peasants or rural inhabitants, urban marginal and urban middle and upper classes, from the 1970s there has been a general abrupt devaluation of the concept of youth as the modernization model begins to run down. At the same time, the family, especially the peasant and marginal urban family but also the integrated urban family, has lost much of its capacity to provide social training for the new generations, and the world of work is finding it difficult to provide jobs for young people. Education, meanwhile, has been eroded as a bridge between family and work; it has become stratified, differentiated and devalued and its standards have been lowered, and to some extent it is having a marginalizing effect.

This is taking place against the background of a failure to find a new model of society and development to replace or re-invigorate the urban industrial model. No clear tendency or

way forward can be discerned, either for the social institutions which deal more directly with youth, such as family, school and work, or for society as a whole. These factors help to deny youth a future and make it difficult to think in terms of a realistic plan or of an "attainable utopia".

A number of circumstances have converged to create this situation, and its understanding requires a brief account of its component elements. The first point to be made, of course, concerns the speed of the modernization process, which began in the 1950s in a rural society and transformed it in less than three decades into a basically urban and industrial society. However, the very speed of the process prevented it from settling down and produced a diversity of cultures and differences of regional development co-existing together and forming a network of inequalities, especially with respect to the transition from personal experience of the world as a community, typical of rural society, to the idea of nationhood and to an understanding of man in the international context. Subsequently, in the third decade of the process of industrial modernization, acute symptoms of its exhaustion began to appear, underlining the lack of a new model to take the place of the model which established modernization.

The former process can be described in the following way, in terms of the different spheres of the social structure and of its most important consequences for today's youth in Colombia:

a) Demographic change, expressed in high birth rates in past decades, resulted by the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s in a large contingent of young people in the population. This happened at the very moment when the modernization model was beginning to run down and high rates of unemployment and underemployment were emerging.

b) That moment also saw the convergence of a number of elements which can be described as an inter-generational crisis, especially with respect to the family's role as a social conditioner of young people. This crisis or decline in contact and in the transmission of the cultural foundations of society from one generation to another was influenced by the following factors: the difference in education which made the parents less able to give the

children guidance in their school work and help them to understand social phenomena, a capacity which is concerned with the habits of analysis and the handling of the information furnished by the school system; the impaired capacity of the parents to understand the urban and cosmopolitan world of modernized Colombian society, due to their rural or semi-rural roots and their children's greater experience of urban life; the decline in the prestige attached to the parents' occupations, or its complete disappearance in a largely urban economy; the inter-generational conflict of values concerning the prestige of the new occupations; the lower level of social training of young people by their parents, especially in the low and marginal strata, owing to the fact that the wives go out to work, and the consequent loss of contact between parents and children; the emergence of new forms of family organization in the young generation which is beginning to marry, and the value conflicts which these new forms generate both between generations and between the sexes, owing to the collision between the survival of attitudes to the marriage relationship rooted in rural or pre-modern society and the economic requirements or needs of a married couple living in an urban society in which the modernization model is beginning to run down. (In this connection, it must be pointed out that organizational adaptations of family life or cohabitation are emerging, somewhat in the form of clans, and are helping to create new forms of solidarity.)

c) The pre-modernization forms of membership of political parties have been replaced, as a result of opposition generated largely by the National Front, by a clientelistic form of organization linked with the expansion of the economic power of the State and the bureaucracy. The majority of the population, especially the young population, has ceased to participate at all in the political process and has a feeling of impotence and disinvolvement in political matters. This situation has been brought about by the lack of modern political parties to encourage participation on the basis of programmes for society. Appeals for them to join a party do not impress young people who have not grown up in that habit, and the country's political life has been ruptured, with

the party apparatuses operating in ways which have no real attraction for young people and very little connection with the realities of the country's situation.

d) The expansion of the school system, which during the modernization process meant extending education beyond the élites, also led to the exclusion of a large part of the population, further weakening the position of those at the bottom of the ladder in a modern urban world. At the same time, as the modernization model began to run down, there was an accentuation of the stratification of educational institutions and programmes or curricula, which also meant discrimination against those not studying in "suitable" institutions or programmes. The concept of social mobility was struck a heavy blow by the modernization crisis, which eroded the relationship between education and work and between education and income. This situation can be seen very clearly in the programmes of secondary technical education and in some higher-education programmes. The point is that the policy of educational diversification is no longer consistent with the development model, or rather that it is moving into crisis in conjunction with the exhaustion of the modernization model. The same thing is happening with the education policies based on theories of human resources or human capital. The relationship between education and work is weakening and becoming a source of frustrated aspirations.

On the other hand, as education has become universal, its quality has deteriorated, and education policies of the modern pedagogical type have been replaced in practice by the drive for policies that produce jobs, with harmful consequences for the quality of education. Instead of a person who participates, criticizes and creates, the system is forming a person with an authoritarian concept of society. Young people are being educated to perform certain specific tasks and not to be able to understand a social, scientific or humanistic whole. The teaching relationship, conditioned by the need to create jobs, is producing a dogmatic view of knowledge and impeding the development of a scientific outlook. But, above all, education in Colombia is now out of touch with the country's new situation. In view of the increase in

unemployment and underemployment among educated people, the most important function which the expansion of education or increase in the number of years of schooling is beginning to perform is to hold a large proportion of the young population back from the work market for a longer time.

e) State services or private initiatives are very limited in terms of medical assistance for

young people, leisure programmes or organized activities which encourage solidarity and a feeling of belonging.

Three aspects of the situation of Colombian youth, showing both its relationship to the missing future and the forms of its participation and exclusion, will now be described: work, political participation and migration.

II

Youth and the world of work

An analysis will be made of four aspects of the connection of youth with the world of work: the proportion of young people in the economically active population, the distribution of employed persons by economic sector, youth unemployment, and the relationship between education and unemployment.

1. *Young people in the economically active population*

At the beginning of the 1970s the proportion of young people in the economically active population (EAP) was 28.4%; at the mid-point of the decade it was 36%; and in 1980 it was 40.7% (DANE, 1981).

The differences in the proportion of young people in the EAP, i.e., in the urban and rural and male and female EAP, are extremely interesting: there are more women than men in both 1971 and 1981 and in both the urban and the rural EAP. Furthermore, the proportion of young people in the urban EAP was greater at both dates, with the exception of the number of men in 1971, which was lower than the number of men in the rural EAP. The upward trend in the proportion of young people in the EAP, especially the urban EAP, is also well-documented; the rural EAP remains practically the same, especially in the case of women.

The general trend, therefore, is for the proportion of young people in the EAP, specifically the urban EAP, to increase, since, as

has been pointed out, their share in the rural EAP tends to remain static. The educational characteristics of the EAP for 1980 also illustrate the enormous differences between town and countryside. In the rural areas 62.1 % of the total EAP has primary education, 9.1 % secondary, and 0.3% university, whereas the education levels of the urban EAP are 42.9% with primary, 39.4% with secondary and 13.5% with university education. These proportions also apply to the young EAP, although in the towns there is a higher proportion of young people with secondary education (48.3%).

The employment rates of active young people are considerably lower than the national rates and lower still in the rural sector. In 1980 employment in urban and rural areas tends towards parity, with the exception of the employment of young people aged 15 to 19, which declines between the two dates in town and countryside, but still with lower participation in the towns. The urban statistics available for the country's seven main towns may be overestimating the youth employment rates, for they do not include large groups of young people in small towns and in some provincial capitals, where one of the main problems is unemployment.

The wage levels of young people with jobs in 1980 show that 37% received less than the minimum wage, 32% the minimum wage, and 31% more than the minimum. The high proportion of young people with wages below

the legal minimum is due to the large number of minors in the work market and to their comparatively low education levels, which limit their access to higher rates of pay.

With respect to the definition of youth, either as an age group or as a period of life occurring between family and school training and entry into the adult world (taking this to mean the world of work), a distinction can be made between rural youth and urban youth, in terms of their different forms of involvement in the work market. The structural heterogeneity characteristic of the country's economic development has produced discrimination in access to basic services, especially education, which affects young people in large groups of the population. This discrimination takes the form of enormous differences in the number of years of schooling, which works to the detriment of rural and marginal groups in particular, for they have to enter the world of work at an early stage in order to help solve the problems of the survival of their families, threatened as they are by the low level of incomes. The young EAP must therefore be described as part of the working-age population in every youth age group from the age of 12. In 1971 48.3% of the rural working-age population was included in the active population. The individual rates for the young population were 20.2% for those aged 12 to 14, 42.2% for the 15-19 group, and 54.8% for those aged 20 to 24. The differences between the sexes were also considerable, with a larger proportion of men in the 12-24 age group. The urban areas had a similar proportion of young people in the EAP, but the differences between the age groups, especially in those under 19, illustrate the profound inequality in the socio-economic structure between town and countryside.

Given the enormous expansion of the education system in recent decades, it might have been expected that there would be a sizeable reduction in the young population in the workforce. In 1980, however, although the specific proportions of young people in the EAP declined for urban areas, rural youth increased its share in the 15-24 group and saw its share decline only in the 12-14 group, from 20.2% in 1971 to 17.9% in 1981. The number of people aged 10 to 12 in the labour force, not identified in the 1971 survey, amounted to 8% in 1981.

These figures clearly show the gradual deterioration in living standards, especially in urban areas, and the internal inefficiency of the education system. The data on the inactive population underline the magnitude of the loss of youth as a period of life. The proportions of young people in the category of students or household workers by age group are as follows: 12-14: 94.4% students, 1.5% household workers; 15-19: 81.7% students, 10.3% household workers; 20-29: 31.2% students, 58.1% household workers.

2. *Youth employment by production sector*

Comparison of the employment structures by sector of activity between 1971 and 1980 for the 15-29 and over-40 age groups in rural and urban areas produces the following conclusions:

a) The fundamental trend is not a greater differentiation but a greater similarity between the jobs held by young people and those held by the generation of the "parents". In 1971 there were several notable differences which had tended to disappear by 1980. In 1971 the difference between young people and adults engaged in agricultural work in the employment structure of the towns was 12.8%; in 1980 it was only 1.4%, with the adults predominating in both cases. Urban growth has meant that employment in the towns is becoming more urban and less rural in nature. On the other hand, the difference between the age groups, which had been 7.3% in favour of the parents in the trade sector in 1971, was only 2.3% in 1980; in the services sector, where the difference had been 12.6% in favour of youth in 1971, it was only 3.2% in 1980. The differences in the other sectors remain practically the same or show only very small changes. All this seems to indicate that the differences in employment by sector found in the 1970s were connected with the period of transition in which the large groups of young people produced by the "population explosion" began to appear on the scene and take their places, in that period of modernizing development, in sectors capable of generating jobs particularly suitable for young people on the lowest rungs of the ladder or in certain areas of the informal economy. In this case, it is particularly clear that the agriculture sector

drives out young people and the services sector draws them in. Subsequently, with the change in the situation of demographic transition, and particularly with the exhaustion of the modernization model of development, these differences in the work sectors between young people and adults diminish almost to the vanishing point. This seems to suggest that the creation of jobs for young people in specific sectors, as happened in other Latin American societies {Durstun and Rosenbluth, 1983}, is a phenomenon which belongs to the specific point of development and subsequently disappears; in Colombia's case, this phenomenon occurred between the 1960s and the 1970s and the move towards homogeneity has already begun.

However, another dimension of the evolution of employment in Colombia in the past decade must be born in mind: the growth of the informal urban sector. According to data from the National Planning Department (DNP), the informal urban sector accounts for 45.6% of the employed population, including workers in industrial undertakings with fewer than 10 workers, own-account workers, unpaid family helpers, and domestic service.

The growth in the economically active population is not absorbed by the modern sector of the economy; consequently, the informal sector becomes the alternative for the unsatisfied demand for employment in the modern sector, and it tends to increase as a result of the crisis in that sector. The DNP figures indicate that 43.7% of the employment generated in the country's towns between 1974 and 1978 was in the informal sector. The fact that the greatest incidence of informal employment is found in services must cast a doubt on the enormous importance attributed, as a modernizing influence, to the phenomena of tertiarization which emerged with the urban industrial model. In fact, side by side with a modern tertiary sector represented by the State and the financial institutions and employing more adults than young people, there co-exists a traditional tertiary sector, better described as underemployment, which at present absorbs the greater part of the population which does not obtain formal employment. Proof of this is provided by the increase in the number of young

people in the employment category of own-account workers between 1971 and 1980, from 8.9 to 14.3%.

b) With respect to the rural employment structure in 1971 (no comparable information is available for 1980), the differences between ages or generations are less than in the towns, and the only ones worth mentioning are a difference of 5.2% in agricultural or primary employment in favour of adults, and of 4.3% in services in favour of young people. This seems to suggest that the intersectoral changes were much sharper in the towns than in the countryside; this is logical in view of the nature of modernizing development. However, this conclusion would have to be checked against the 1980 rural employment structure.

3. *Youth unemployment*

The rates of youth unemployment are always higher than the adult ones, and the differences between the national rates and those of the youth groups almost double between 1971 and 1980. On the other hand, a comparison of the specific national unemployment rates for town and countryside and by sex gives the following results: a) the urban youth rates are double the urban national rates for men; b) the rates for young urban women are higher than the totals for urban women, but the gap is smaller than for men; c) the rural youth unemployment rates (men and women) are higher than those for rural adults and they also tend towards double the total national youth rates; d) urban youth unemployment was very high in 1971 (17.7 and 18.1% for men and women respectively) and it declined slightly in 1980 to 13.2 and 16.9%. Rural youth unemployment, in contrast, has increased, and although the male rate is relatively low (3.6 and 5.1% in 1971 and 1980), the female rate is extremely high (18.1 and 24.1% for those two years).

The underemployment rates are also higher for young people than for the population as a whole, especially for men; young women follow the trend of the total female population. Young men have rates of 21.4% for the 15-19 age group and 20.2% for the 20-29 group, whereas the rate for the population as a whole is 17.3%. The same trends are found for both visible and invisible underemployment.

A comparison of the evolution of the unemployment structure among young people and adults indicates very clear trends. In 1976 the 12-29 age group accounted for 75.8% of total unemployment in the country; in 1980 that proportion had increased to 81.2%. Adult employment increased in the same period, indicating the difficulty which young people have in finding work, for the new jobs are almost always filled by adults. In addition, the low rates of pay disappoint the expectations created by education, with the result that large groups of young people abandon the structure of formal employment and try to find other kinds of work. In 1980 80.2% of the high rate of underemployment (15.4%) is due to low incomes and 11.6% to underutilization. The young population also spends the highest average amounts of time seeking work. In 1980 42.7% of unemployed persons aged 15 to 19 and 37.6% aged 20 to 29 spent more than four months seeking work.

4. *Education and unemployment*

The relationship between more education, better jobs and higher pay postulated by the modernization model of development has lost much of its force in Colombia. The expansion of education and the crisis in industry have brought about a number of changes in the social significance of education. Although the sectors which plan education still see it primarily in terms of human capital and economic productivity, and as a guarantee of a job, everything seems to indicate that this economic function of education was peculiar to a specific point in development through modernization and that its direction is beginning to change.

In 1964, the high point in the development of the urban industrial model, the positive relationship between education level and job was very clear. The higher unemployment rate affected mainly the illiterate population

(23.7%); the population with secondary education had a rate of 13.5% and university graduates one of 10.8%. However, a study on employment and university education carried out in the National Association of Financial Institutes (ANIF) indicates that between 1976 and 1978 the relationship between unemployment and education level did not follow the same trend. On the contrary, the lowest unemployment rates were found among people with no education at all or only primary education (5.2 and 7.9% respectively). In second place were those who had university or other higher education (8.3 and 9.5%), while the highest unemployment rates were found amongst those with academic secondary education (12.6%) and technical secondary education (21.0%). The high rate of unemployment among specialist technicians is particularly noteworthy as an indicator of the exhaustion of the urban industrial model (Chiappe and Toro, 1978).

The low rate of unemployment among professionals in recent years conceals a growing problem of underemployment affecting mainly professionals from the low and middle strata educated at universities other than the élite ones. The main features of professional underemployment are a shift to branches of activity other than the one in which the person is qualified, movement within the occupational category itself, and an increase in temporary work, especially in community, social and personal services.

In 1980 the unemployment rates were higher in the towns and much higher for women than for men. The highest rates were still found among persons with secondary education. The 1981-1983 figures show remarkable differences in the unemployment rates for different towns. The unemployment rates for persons with higher education, 11.3% of the overall total and 14.7% in the case of women, can be considered very high.

III

Political participation

Political participation is one of the areas in which it can be seen with greatest clarity that the concept of youth, accepted and extolled in theory, lacks real meaning in practice. The first indicator of this is the almost total lack of studies on political life among young people, on their participation, their leadership, their values and attitudes, and the lack of programmes to ensure their involvement in the country's political life. We will now discuss, on the basis of partial information from various general studies on politics, three central aspects of the political life of Colombian youth: a) their voting; b) their membership of political parties, and c) their political education.

All the electoral studies carried out in the country affirm that abstention from voting by young people is very widespread and much greater, moreover, than among adults. For example, in the 1968 elections in Cali abstention by young people aged 21 to 25 amounted to 74% (McCamat and others, 1968). This same trend can be seen in Bogotá in the 1972 and 1974 elections (Losada and Murillo, 1973; Murillo and Williams, 1975; Losada and Williams, 1972). In 1978 the national abstention rate among young people aged 18 to 20 was 75% and in 1980 82% of young people aged 18 to 24 did not vote (Losada, 1981). A study carried out by the ANIF Social Group tried to establish the causes of this behaviour and it was found that only 19.3% of young people aged 18 to 24 abstained because they rejected the social system; 50.3% did so out of indifference to politics. At the same time, 40% of young people said that the country's problems were purely political, while 68.3% showed profound ignorance of the local and national organization of politics (ANIF, 1981). Another piece of research carried out by the Department of Political Science of the University of the Andes shows that young people have a poor image of the country's political institutions. In fact, only 2.5% thought that election results represented the opinion of the majority of the electorate, while 89.1% gave

a negative opinion of members of parliament, using such terms as "dishonest", "inefficient" and "unproductive" (Latorre and Murillo, 1982).

Women's participation in politics, according to a study by Patricia Pinzón de Lewin of electoral data for the period 1958-1974 indicates the following conclusions: women take part in politics less than men; they vote less often, participate less in political or party organizations, and their involvement tends to be greater among adults and women of the top social class. This phenomenon appears to be very similar for both sexes, but it affects women much more (Pinzón de Lewin and Rothlisberger, 1977). Some figures may give a clearer idea of this: in the 1974 elections the total rate of male abstention was 24.3% and female 45.7%, whereas in the case of women aged 21 to 24 abstention amounted to 67%, a proportion which declines with age to a level of 31% for women aged 45 to 49.

On the other hand, membership of or identification with a political party follow clear lines when age is compared with the nature of the party: 44.8% of young people aged 18 to 24 say they belong to one of the traditional Colombian political parties (liberal and conservative), whereas 82.2% of persons aged 45 to 64 say this. Of persons aged 18 to 24 4.3% identify with opposition parties, and 1.9% do this in the 45-54 age group. However, the really significant thing is the high proportion of young people (48.8%) who do not identify with any party; in contrast, only 15.5% of the adult group (45 to 64) do not claim to belong to a party (ANIF, 1981). According to this same study, young people aged 18 to 24 take almost no part in associations of various kinds, devote little time to radio, television and newspapers, and even less time, in these media, to news or other programmes that may be considered political.

In a study carried out among university students, 22% claimed no party identification, and 90% took no part in any grouping or party. These figures are very significant when it is

remembered that among Colombian young people the university is the place which has most fostered political participation of various kinds, especially among the groups of the Left. We thus have a picture in which young people do not believe in and do not take part in the traditional political parties and where there are no other political groupings, party or otherwise, to fill this gap. There is also a very high level of ignorance about the national political system on the part of young people (Latorre and Murillo, 1982).

The voting behaviour of young people is, however, only an expression of formal participation in the country's democratic life. Their marked abstentionism, their lack of interest and their ignorance of the national political system have more profound causes rooted in social phenomena of the greatest importance for the definition of the role of youth and for the consideration of youth in terms of an integrated or marginal human group in Colombian life. We will now discuss briefly some of the most important factors affecting the political participation of young people.

a) The changes in the family, which occurred in conjunction with industrialization and with the heavy waves of migration from the countryside to the town and between regions, have produced effects of rootlessness and loss of party-political identification traditionally linked with ecological bases and family traditions. The generation gap between the parents, who experienced the effervescent effects of the social model based on industrialization and urbanization of the economy, and the children, who are now growing up in a situation in which there is no clear model or national social objective, manifests itself clearly in the lack of interest shown by the new generations in the traditional political modes. A number of studies demonstrate this: university students, 90% of whom are not active in any party, say that 87% of their parents do belong to the traditional liberal and conservative parties (Latorre and Murillo, 1982). On the other hand, the study on the political participation of women mentioned above shows that abstention among women heads of households (42%) and wives (45%) is lower than among daughters (51%) or other female relatives in the family (54%) (Pinzón de

Lewin and Rothlisberger, 1977). Although the family background might encourage, as has traditionally been the case in Colombia, a pattern of voting and political identification, the changes which the family has undergone during the country's historical development have created a very significant generation gap in the political participation of parents and children. The family has lost much of its capacity to provide education in political life and transmit a concept of society acceptable to the new generations.

b) At least one study shows that there is no association between education and exercise of the right to vote (Pinzón de Lewin and Rothlisberger, 1977). This fact throws much light on the nature of education. The political education imparted by the school, it would seem, does not lead to participation on election days. It is very possible that the authoritarian nature of the social and teaching relationships in the classroom and the institutional government of the schools generate apathy and scepticism about society and the real possibilities of action within it. It is also very probable that the notion of society transmitted through the subject-matter of social sciences fosters political apathy because it is out of touch with the realities of the students' lives. This certainly emerges more clearly with respect to the teaching of history in terms of heroic figures, whose value system and world view have little to do with the problems of young people in contemporary society.

Even the university student movements which were all the rage in the 1960s and the first part of the 1970s, now do little more than form small parties of the Left of no attraction for young people, or groups which take the guerilla route. In general terms, great political apathy has developed among university students (Leal, 1982).

c) The traditional political parties have not formulated stable and durable programmes for youth, although they do assert the importance of this population group, especially at election time. Some parties of the Left have devised this kind of programme, but as they have little access to the machinery of the State, these programmes remain little more than proselytizing exhortations. Account must also be taken of the de-politicizing effect of the National Front, one of whose political goals was to reduce the

acrimonious political atmosphere surrounding the traditional parties which had led to violence (Guzman and others, 1962). The Colombian political parties are only organized to any great extent at election time and they do not offer a permanent sphere of action in which young people can take part, develop as leaders and involve themselves in a more organized manner. In other democracies the political parties are the prime exponents of the function of political-education institutions, but this is not the case in Colombia, and young people do not have a very clear idea of what their role in a political party might be, not only with respect to a concept of power within society and the formulation of plans and programmes which define a clear and attractive party line, but also with respect to

their involvement in the parties, apart from their temporary role as agitators at election time.

The low level of participation of Colombian youth in politics seems to be determined by two types of factor and their interrelationship. The first is the lack of a national goal, of a purpose investing the action of the State and the political parties with meaning and within which young people can see themselves as an integral part; and the lack of a plan to define the direction in which society is headed, similar to the concept of industrialization, urbanization and modernization in the 1950s and 1960s. The second factor is the consequent loss of educational power by the social institutions which exist for this purpose, such as the family, the school and the political party.

IV

Migration

Several analysts have described migration in Colombia as a form of economic exile (Cardona and others, 1980). In order to clarify the true meaning of this notion of economic exile, distinctions have to be made between three types of migration. Internal migration, firstly, is basically population movements among regions and from the countryside to the town. It reflects the very frequent changes in the country's development poles and it cannot strictly be termed exile if migration caused by violence in its various forms is excluded. A second type is migration to neighbouring countries, especially Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama, where larger and better-paid work markets have at times existed. This kind of migration has many seasonal aspects and does, in any event, imply a return to Colombia. A third type of migration has traditionally occurred to the United States and it is of a more permanent nature.

It is of interest in this study to examine the two types of migration to foreign countries, for they act as an escape valve for employment problems and, in some cases, they represent a search for broader cultural horizons. Colombia

has not always been an exporter of population; on the contrary, 30 years ago people migrated to Colombia from Venezuela and Ecuador. Today this process has undergone a dramatic reversal, and only the crisis in the oil economies of Venezuela and Ecuador has produced any reduction in the numbers of migrants.

Contrary to what might be thought, it is not unemployed Colombians who migrate to Venezuela, but manual workers, day labourers and low-income white-collar workers, mostly young people under 30. As many as 75% of the migrants were born into urban families or had migrated much earlier to the big towns. Forty per cent of them have completed primary education, 10% are illiterate and 50% have secondary education. Of the latter, 40% have studied in the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA), an official institute for the training of skilled manual workers. This indicates that there has been abundant migration of young people to Venezuela and that at least two big groups can be identified in this migratory flow. The first is made up of typical urban-marginal young people, possibly from families which have

migrated from the countryside to the town, very possibly with incomplete primary education or illiterate; they are the most exploited people in Venezuela, especially in farm work or in the less desirable jobs in the towns (Gómez and Diaz, 1983). A second group of young people seems to migrate to Venezuela on better terms, having acquired greater work experience in Colombia, secondary education and, in at least half the cases, a decent level of specialized technical training.

Perhaps the factor which best defines migration to neighbouring countries, which are also developing countries, as distinct from other forms of foreign migration by Colombians, is the strong likelihood of return. In other words, it is a question of temporary migration, for various lengths of time, depending on the nature of the employment in Venezuela, but with the great majority of the migrants returning to their place of origin. Moreover, the idea of return is an element which defines the project from its very conception. For it is not, generally speaking families which migrate, but individuals who, in 80% of the cases, have a house with basic services in Colombia, periodically send part of their earnings home, and on their return bring with them small amounts of capital which they invest in the improvement of their homes, meeting their families' health and education deficits and setting up workshops or neighbourhood stores.

Studies on migration of Colombians to Panama, Ecuador and, in particular, Venezuela indicate that migration to neighbouring countries acts as a means of cutting the Gordian knots of unemployment, underemployment and low wages formed by the type of development Colombia has experienced. In this sense, migration represents a temporary form of economic exile, used primarily by groups of marginal, manual and other workers whose family incomes are insufficient and have to be supplemented by surpluses from wages earned in stronger currencies abroad.

Juvenile work in the domestic market has been the mechanism for making good the shortfall in wages for the maintenance of the labour force, and migration to neighbouring countries is another form of youth employment; in a way, migration is also an example of how the

age of youth is cut short among the bottom population groups.

A decision to migrate on the part of a young Colombian is influenced by four factors related to the country's structural impoverishment: unemployment and underemployment, low wages, the need to supplement the family income to improve living standards, especially with respect to housing, health and education, and the need to enter the informal economy as a means of creating more stable mechanisms for producing income to maintain the standard of living. Joining the informal economy is necessarily an alternative not only for young people moving within the circle of unemployment and underemployment or of typically marginal occupations, but also for those such as skilled manual workers who have been trained to work at the heart of the economy, owing to the growing industrial unemployment and the low wages resulting from the industrial crisis.

The migration of young people to work in neighbouring countries is therefore an example of the twofold way in which society marginalizes its youth: by obliging them to work during the period defined as youth, thus depriving them of the right to youth and, on the other hand and paradoxically, by denying them paid work and thus driving them into the ranks of adult structural marginality.

Between 1951 and 1977 27.5% of the South Americans admitted as immigrants into the United States were Colombians. But this migration has not been constant over time; of all the immigrants into the United States since 1936, between 1936 and 1945 only 1.3% were from Colombia, and between 1946 and 1955 the figure was 6%; but between 1956 and 1965 it was 34.7%, and in the following decade 58%. This means that between 1956 and 1977 92.7% of Colombian migrants were legal migrants to the United States. This of course does not take into account the rapid growth in illegal immigrants (Cardona, 1980). Of this migratory flow over the last two decades, 49% were young people aged 10 to 29. If the number of children under 10 is included, the total amounts to 68.4% of the migrants.

The migration of Colombians to the United States is very different in kind from the

migration to neighbouring countries. Perhaps the main common denominators are the high proportion of young people and the fact that the migrants are seeking solutions to the economic and cultural problems facing them in their own country. The occupational and educational characteristics of the migrants are very different. Sixty-one per cent are under 14, housewives, students or retired persons. Among the migrants who work, the largest category is made up of professional and similar persons (8%), followed by craftsmen (6.9%), office workers (6.5%), and skilled manual workers (6.2%). The smallest groups seem to be made up of the least qualified workers: domestic staff, service workers, sales persons, unskilled manual workers (Cardona, 1980). Some 14.5% of the immigrants into the United States have either complete or incomplete primary education; 43.5% have complete or incomplete secondary schooling, 29.1% have studied at the university level, and 2.9% have postgraduate qualifications. On the other hand, the general trend is for families to migrate, rather than individuals, and for the notion of return to give rise to conflict; although return is desired and talked about, it is rarely achieved, and the migration usually becomes permanent.

A distinction must be made between two types of migration of young people to the United

States. The first wave was made up basically of professional people seeking better work opportunities and it was called the "brain drain". It usually consisted of non-marginal young people, and this situation was and remains the subject of a number of studies and plans for return sponsored by the Colombian Government. The second wave of migrants included, in addition to persons with university and technical qualifications, families and a large group of young people not educated to the same level as the first group. They include the illegal immigrants into the United States, with groups from the middle class, the lower-middle class and some of working-class extraction, but hardly marginal in their Colombian origins. Rather than marginality, the direct motives for migration seem to be low wages, underemployment and the lack of opportunities for economic and cultural progress. Where the "brain drain" is concerned, attention must be drawn to the unemployment among professionals in Colombia caused by the limitations of the domestic work market. That might explain this marked characteristic of Colombian society, especially among health professionals (24.5%), engineers (13.3%), teachers (13.8%), technicians (17.6%), and auditors and accountants (9.5%) during the period from 1954 to 1976 (Cardona, 1980).

V

Youth and education

Young people in Colombia will suffer the fate suffered by Colombian society in its future. Most of the circumstances described in this paper affect society as a whole and are not peculiar to youth, but they do form a framework outside of which the youth problem could not be understood. Attention must be drawn, however, to a general factor of prime importance which does directly affect young people and their integration in society and which can be worked at with the specific purpose of furnishing an effective tool for improving youth's capacity to

participate and its role as agent and protagonist of social change: this is education.

If present-day education in Colombia is to be thought of as a means of bringing about significant and beneficial changes, the following points, among others, must be taken into consideration:

a) The clearest fact in the present relationship between education and society in Colombia is the lack of connection between the two. With modernization, education acquired and economic significance which it did not have

before, a connection with production and work and an identification with productivity, improvement of personal incomes and development. This was why so much importance was given to the economic part of education and to this social function and its planning. With the arrival of the crisis of the modernization model, however, education is beginning to lose a large part of its predominantly economic function. This fact must therefore be taken into account and a new assessment made of the other functions of education which, without disappearing during the peak period of modernization, had been relegated to the background. These functions include all those affecting quality, not in terms of school output but in terms of capacity to inculcate an understanding of the world, of society and of the individual. It is of greatest importance, with respect both to education planning and to the image which young and adult Colombians have of education, to balance the idea that education is a passport to work, high incomes and social mobility with the notion that it is a way of seeking knowledge to increase individual and social growth, and a means of increasing a person's knowledge of his own community and society so that he can participate in them more effectively and play a role in their government and in the form that government takes.

b) All this means reconsidering the usefulness of continuing to define Colombian education in terms of extreme diversification at both secondary and higher levels, which in practical terms creates careers and specialities as a response to changes in demand. In this system, education has been transformed into an instrument in the service of demand and it has ended up by training "technologists" who are incapable of seeing things in the round. An extremely compartmentalized outlook has thus been created which sets the school and the world in opposition to each other, or at least has turned the school's back to the world. This essentially utilitarian orientation has tended to produce dogmatic and authoritarian people with essentially partial and specialized knowledge; they are unaware of the many different and complementary forms of knowledge or of the insufficiency of any particular area of knowledge, and they are incapable of thinking scientifically.

The point of this kind of education policy is to train people for a static society, for a model of society in which the most important changes are variations in the demand for a certain type of human resources.

c) It is therefore useful to consider the possibilities of education focussed on the problems of quality and not on responses to the immediate needs in human resources. This means education for a changing society, for a model-less society, education which produces a person who can cope with any kind of future and not a person trained for only one kind of society, a person capable of thinking scientifically and not crushed under the weight of specific information which does not help him to understand the changing and surprising world around him, a person who can cope imaginatively with a society in crisis, who can function in a world of contradictory values, and not a person programmed to view life in only one way. In other words, a person who has been prepared to participate in a changing democratic society.

d) This kind of person is not being produced by today's school system in Colombia—as a result of the policy of specialized education focussed on employment and of the social organization of school institutions. The present tendency in Colombia's schools is not to teach people to think but to store largely irrelevant information. They are not taught to relate theory to practice, to apply theories to the solution of the problems facing young people, or to create knowledge. The Colombian school tends to deaden rather than stimulate the imagination. It is thus generating low-grade cultural growth which then produces a low-grade democracy.

Above all, however, the Colombian school is training people for a form of society and a specific type of development which are already in crisis; and this very fact exacerbates the crisis affecting young people and society itself, for education does not function as a useful and valid tool for coping with the future. In many cases, as this paper has shown, it does not even perform this function for the present.

e) A change in education of the kind described necessarily implies social training: a special emphasis on ensuring that the students learn to study their society, to see it as it really is,

to criticize it and to participate in its future and in the moulding of its social characteristics. Education must be seen as a means of participation in democracy and in the country's political life and not as a factor of marginalization, exclusion and stratification. Such a change of outlook, together with a sharp improvement in quality and in the access to

education of the groups which are at present outside the system, of the marginal urban and peasant groups, is an essential tool of integration through the participation of Colombian young people, and it represents the best available means of offering them a future which they will themselves help to shape.

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