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Youth Service in the Borough

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IT has been said with considerable justification that the reason for the small amount of juvenile delinquency in Epsom and Ewell is due, in no small measure, to the quality of Youth Service in the Borough. This is no doubt true, but Youth Service has as its object a far more positive aspect than the merely negative one of the prevention of bad behaviour. Youth Service provides facilities for the leisure-time needs of young people between the ages of leaving school and attaining 21 years. These facilities cannot be considered in isolation from those provided by religious bodies, educational institutions and commercial entertainment, nor from home and employment, which make up the whole life of young people. Further education, of which Youth Service is a part, can only be real when it is related to the rest of life. Youth Service is concerned with the spiritual, physical, intellectual and social development of young people.

At this time when our Borough is celebrating its coming of age it is appropriate for us to take stock of the situation and to see if our own youth organisations have lived up to the high ideals which they have set themselves. It can be asserted with confidence that they have. In Epsom and Ewell we have a large number of such organisations that have done and are continuing to do the most wonderful work on behalf of the citizens of tomorrow.

A large variety of activities is catered for in the many clubs, brigades, societies, etc., that make up Youth Service in this Borough. All three of the Pre-Service Units are represented, there are many Girl Guide Companies and Boy Scout Troops, the Boys' Brigade, Church Lads' Brigade, the Girls' Life Brigade, and the Girls' Friendly Society, are all in operation in the Borough. For those interested in first-aid and home nursing there are the St. John Ambulance cadets, the St. John Nursing cadets and the Junior Red cross. Most of the Churches have youth clubs or youth fellowships and there are also open youth clubs, All these organisations cater for a multitude of interests and activities. For those whose interests are specialised, there are organisations for them also. The foregoing list is by no means complete ; the Borough Youth Committee does in fact receive many requests for affiliation from new organisations. As the need arises for a new organisation - so that need seems to be met.

Co-ordinating all this work is the Borough Youth Committee, which was formed many years ago. It has no power over the activities of its constituent organisations but all such organisations are expected to play their part in the wider sphere of Youth Service. Every year the Borough Youth committee sponsors and organises events such as the Athletic Sports, the Service of Dedication on Commonwealth Youth Sunday, a Display in the Baths Hall and other events. It also has many administrative tasks to perform. But its main job is to mobilise the whole resources of the community in the service of Youth. Now this phrase includes almost everything-the training of leaders and helpers, the provision of premises, helping with finance in certain cases, publicity, the stimulation of existing organisations by advice on aims, management and programmes and a whole host of other things.

When listed, the activities of the Borough Youth Committee and all the affiliated organisations sound very impressive, but all this labour and thought amount to one thing - concern for the young person and an intense desire to help him or her to adulthood. That is what Youth Service is for. A great deal is being done in this Borough to further these lofty and thoroughly worthy aims but a lot more could be done with more resources. Youth Service, like any other organisation, has its problems, shortage of money, lack of equipment and a shortage of premises but the real factor that holds back the extension of the work is lack of leadership and assistance. Much more could be done if people would come forward to give a little of their time to assist in this great and vital work. Even a couple of hours per week could be most useful.

We are most fortunate in this Borough in having a Youth Officer who is not only extremely keen and efficient, but has the welfare of the younger generation very much at heart. He will be only too pleased to receive offers of assistance and will put volunteers in touch with the appropriate people. You will help, won't You ?