

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S CENTRE

In 1970, the International Children's Centre, in Paris, celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its foundation. A recent issue of its review¹ contained a paper written for the occasion by Dr. Etienne Berthet, Director-General of the Centre, in which he outlined the Centre's activities from 1950 to 1970 and explained that they were oriented in three main directions: education, information and research.

Looking to the future, he concluded that the Centre's work during the next few years would be (a) to extend activities related to education, information and study in developing countries, and (b) to adapt programmes to the needs of children and adolescents, which presupposed great flexibility of action so as to be able to face the profound changes which would mark the coming decade.

We quote Dr. Berthet on the Centre's future tasks.

a. Extension of the activities of the International Children's Centre in developing countries

The experience gained and the working methods developed over the past two decades will enable the International Children's Centre to improve and extend its activities in developing countries, both in the training of personnel and in applied social and medico-social studies.

During the coming years, the programmes of the International Children's Centre will serve the following aims:

- maternal health protection during pregnancy, confinement and breast-feeding, health training in child care and the importance of birth spacing;
- child and adolescent health protection, special attention being paid to the ages which present the highest risks, the peri-natal period, pre-school age and adolescence;

¹ *Courrier*, Paris, 1971, No. 3.

MISCELLANEOUS

- the harmonious growth and development of children and adolescents, which presupposes:
 - the existence of a family home in which they 'feel sure of affection and material well-being;
 - a quantitatively and qualitatively balanced diet;
 - medical and social control at the various stages of growth and development;
 - schooling and vocational training to enable children to enter the adult world with every possible opportunity;
- care for the handicapped, whatever the cause of their physical, mental or social disability.

b. Adaptation of programmes to the needs of children and adolescents

While hunger, disease, ignorance and poverty will for a long time yet be the background against which children will be born and will grow up in developing countries, in the years to come fresh problems will arise for which we must be prepared and to which we must give thought and reflection.

Demographic growth will continue at the present rate, and some countries will need to adopt a policy of family planning as part and parcel of the maternity and child welfare services.

Economic change will result in urban migration, with all the attendant psychological and social tensions with which governments will be confronted.

The effect which the destruction of the traditional family structures will have on youth will be all the more marked as most developing countries have as yet no vocational, cultural or social welfare institutions.

Accelerated scientific and technical progress in every sphere of biology, psychopedagogy and sociology will compel us to revise our ideas and our methods of approach to these problems.

We may conclude by pointing out that one of the most original aspects of the work carried out by the International Children's Centre is the establishment of a meeting place where doctors, nutritionists, sociologists, psychologists, teachers, lawyers, town-

planners, administrators, demographers and economists from greatly differing countries can exchange views, discuss working methods and compare their experiences, bearing in mind the fact that an advance in one field of activity will be conditioned by a parallel advance in others, since new ideas always emerge at the crossroads of the various disciplines.

VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

The General Conference of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) was held in New York in June and July 1971. The theme was International Voluntary Actions for Human Need, and the meeting was an occasion for several institutions to express ideas on problems related, in particular, to migrants, refugees, and the responsibility of voluntary organizations in the Second Development Decade. This subject, which concerns the humanitarian institutions and their present-day duties, is discussed by Mr. Chidambaranathan in a paper which he presented and of which we quote a few extracts:

... Voluntary Agencies do not merely have a role to play in the Second Development Decade. They have a responsibility—in leadership, in education and in action.

... They have a long tradition and history of humanitarian work and development programmes. The source of their inspiration or philosophies may be derived from social, religious, ethnic, economic, academic or charitable backgrounds. Their membership and constituency vary from the national to the regional and international. Some have been in existence for 50 or more years. Between them these Voluntary Agencies expend more than a billion dollars annually on development assistance. They are a force to reckon with.