

Twenty-fifth Anniversary of NSW Good Neighbour Council

Papadopoulos, George Outline of Comments to be made at the 25th Anniversary Conference of the Good Neighbour Council of New South Wales 1975

Participation, Migrants and Ethnicity

by George Papadopoulos, Part-time Commissioner, Social Welfare Commission.

1. The nature of migration to Australia since World War II

- a) Politico-Socially motivated
- b) Economically motivated.

2. Immigration as an adjunct to labour policy - federalism and the lack of appropriate forward planning.

3. Participation meaning the ability to decisively affect decision making in relation to

- a) the assessment of needs
- b) the allocation of priorities to those needs
- c) the allocation of resources to meet the needs in terms of the priorities as identified and allocated by the participant.

4. Inhibitions and restraints upon the individual migrant and the Ethnic Group

- a) Language and cultural barriers (including the host-guest syndrome)
- b) Lack of economic resources which creates institutional and social patronage and dependency relationships
- c) Remoteness of Institutions e.g.

- (i) Government, and the myth that those who govern know something of the process of Government
- (ii) Political parties, trade unions and churches, the organisational similarities of which are greater than their differences e.g. principles of Authority, hierarchy, ideology and conservation

Irrelevant or only partially relevant institutions which serve to divert the migrant and Ethnic Group from fully comprehending and attacking their problems e.g. the Good Neighbour Councils; are they perhaps a remnant of Assimilation? Is the rhetoric of integration simply that of a slogan? What does it mean?

d) The rhetoric of the family of the nation is a further example. Do the Good Neighbour Councils have an inbuilt system of diversion (even of repression)? Are they in any sense representative, if so - of whom? Are they not sometimes equally representative of the institutions of Australian Society which have so far not distinguished themselves in their attitude to migrants and Ethnic Groups inasmuch as they still work to a charitable model of social action rather than a view of social justice.

e) Traditional Australian Xenophobia and Xenomachy have in a much larger framework led to a discrimination of apathy although remnants of the prior two factors exist.

f) The unwillingness of Australian Government and Society to recognise the authenticity and integrity of the migrant and Ethnic experience, e.g. In the fields of Communal Organisation and Education.

5. Towards some solutions

- (a) the acceptance of Multiculturalism and

Ethnicity.

(b) Ethnic Community Councils and not Councils of Ethnic Individuals (representation after election, responsibility and recall).

The Good Neighbour Councils to be restructured and to develop a truly integrative function by being the vehicles of Community education campaigns.

c) Direct block funding of Ethnic Communities.

d) Development of an Institute of Ethnic Studies.

e) A Public Enquiry (preferably a Royal Commission) into Multiculturalism and Ethnicity.