

The Seychelles National Youth Service

Part II

From Seed to the Flower

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Chapter 7

The NYS and the wider society: the capitalist economy of knowledge

1. The NYS is not an island cut off from the rest of Seychellois society. It is a part - a key part - in the struggle to transform social relations in the country as a whole. Its very existence was only made possible by the revolution, and the shift in political power to a socialist government. But while political power may have shifted, economic and social structures take longer to change. The state has expanded its role in production - in construction for example, in farming and fishing, and in the development of the outer islands, - but capitalist relations still dominate the economy. This means that the social divisions we discussed in Chapter 1 are being daily reproduced - albeit in a modified form as a result of government action on wages and working conditions. The question that is posed, therefore, is how the NYS relates to these wider social and economic divisions. Can it help to transform them, or are its visions in danger of being transformed by them? Are these external forces so strong that the very attempt to build new social relations within the educational system should be seen as utopian, or can the seed of the new society become a flower?

2. Let us consider this contradiction first from an economic perspective. The point at issue is whether the NYS - regardless of its socialist purposes and democratic relations - will be forced by competitive market pressures to duplicate capitalist discipline and priorities within its own processes of production. The point has become a central one for socialist co-operatives and state enterprises operating within a capitalist market. Such operations have transformed the capitalist relations of property. Some have tried to change the capitalist relations of the labour process itself. But in as much as they are forced to sell their products on the market in competition with capitalist firms, and in so far as they are required to realise a profit in order to pay interest on capitalist loans, then they may also be compelled to adopt capitalist methods in production and distribution. We are here with the

central problem of the law of value and socialism. It is a problem not just for individual socialist initiatives within a predominantly capitalist economic system (such as the co-operative movement in Western Europe), but for whole socialist economies as they relate to the capitalist world market. In both cases there will be different degrees of autonomy or insulation from the law of value. In both cases the new relations of property may permit increases in efficiency and the reduction of waste. Socialist products may then become competitive with capitalist ones without allowing capitalist relations of production to sour those being built-up in socialism. All we should note at this point is that such pressures on socialist production do exist, and can only be countered if their origins and forms are understood.

3. The NYS is clearly not in the position of, say, a co-operative manufacturer competing with capital on the market. It is not required to make a profit or 'sell' its final products. While it is a productive unit, the aim of its production is economic self-reliance and the development of educational labour processes. The government is for the moment funding the deficit - as it would fund the cost of a conventional school system. With the exception of the size of the villages, there is no evidence that capitalist criteria of 'productivity' and 'efficiency' are being applied. It is the educational and socialist goals which are primary. Nor is there any sense of the NYS competing as an educational unit (as there is in many capitalist school systems), and consequently being forced to adopt the norms and methods of its competitors. Its success indeed will be judged by the degree to which it succeeds in not reproducing the norms of the capitalist school on the one hand, or the capitalist labour process on the other.

4. There is, however, one market which does bear directly on the NYS and that is the market for labour. Clearly an educational system must bear some relation to the work that its students will be engaged on in the future. A project like the NYS which attempts to change the division of labour within the educational system, and in particular to break down the division between intellectual and manual education, necessarily raises questions about the division of labour in the society as a whole.

5. In capitalism the division of labour is both horizontal and vertical. It is horizontal in that work is specialized: not just between trades like masons and fishermen, but within trades and factories where for example conveyor belts unite workers who have been confined to the most detailed and repetitive tasks. It is vertical in the sense that jobs carry with them different degrees of power, satisfaction, and wage levels. Modern capitalism is recoiling from the degree of horizontal fragmentation of tasks that it has brought into being. Soldering a single component onto circuit boards, one after another, or stamping out the same metal dies hour after hour, has led to worker resistance. The movement to job enlargement has tried to counter this by giving an individual worker a number of different simple jobs of this kind. But in general fragmentation is the rule. It is increasing not merely in factories, but among doctors, architects, researchers, engineers. Each can become prisoners of their specialisation, as can the educational system which is asked to prepare the future specialists at an ever earlier age. Any socialist system of production will have to address the issue of horizontal fragmentation, of mobility between specialisms and the extent to which the demands of specialisation should be allowed to reach down into education and splinter the experience of youth.

6. The main challenge, however, is the vertical division of labour, and above all the division between intellectual and manual labour. This is not just a technical division. It is a social one. Capital has systematically taken away from labour its power to determine how a job should be done, and concentrated the conception and design of labour processes in the hands of specialists. It has done the same in respect to the transformation of nature, of social relations outside capitalist production, even of politics itself. It has constituted a new class of technical workers whose job is to plan work for others to execute. The great step forward in this process came in the late 19th. century when science became an independent productive force separated from production. All aspects of life and nature were now subjected to the same objective gaze. The mind distanced itself from experience, in order to analyse that experience, transforming it in the mind before returning to transform it in practice. Not only did we find new natural sciences,

but new sciences of society (sociology), of capitalist management (Taylorism), of personal relations (psychology) and of capitalist politics (Schumpeter). In all these spheres the powers of conceptualisation, of abstraction, of planning, were concentrated in a new class of labour, while manual labour was stripped of the power of its practical knowledge, and trained to do rather than to think.

7. It is not all knowledge which has been monopolised in this way. Capital requires so called unskilled labour to display much intelligence and skill which cannot be programmed away. The point is that these skills are generalised. Women's work in electronics assembly demands great accuracy and dexterity, yet it is classed as unskilled because women in general have been taught the closely related skills of sewing and needlework in childhood as a preparation for domestic labour. The capacity to conceptualise, to analyse and objectify has not been generalised in this way, but rather intentionally restricted. It is this capacity which has become central to capitalist development over the last 100 years.

8. In this new political economy of knowledge there were three central institutions: the school, the examination and the wage. In the school the future 'workers by brain' were selected and trained. Those who failed to be selected were consigned to manual labour and were educated accordingly. The education system thus became the main source for the primitive accumulation of mental labour. It was not just a question of developing a conceptualising capacity of the selected few, it was also one of reproducing a non conceptualising capacity among the many, since the future practice of intellectual labour necessarily implied a deskilled manual labour force to carry out the designs of the few.

9. Schools were producing labour power as a commodity. It was destined for the labour market where it would be sold to employers for an individual wage. The fact that what was being sold was a capacity to labour posed no particular problems for manual labour. An employer could immediately see the relative strength of particular workers.

With skilled workers like carpenters, a new worker would commonly be employed for a day to test out his skills in practice. Difficult workers could be dismissed and replaced at minimal cost. With intellectual labour, however, the problem was not so simple. It would take time for the intellectual worker to "produce" his or her output. The costs of failure could be high. It might be difficult to find a replacement. Ranges of conceptual capacity are wider than physical capacity, and cannot be seen by the employer's naked eye. Some means of measurement was therefore needed by which one intellectual capacity could be compared to another. Chief among these means has been the examination.

10. The word examination comes from 'examen' meaning the tongue of a balance, and originally meant to weigh accurately. From the commensuration of weight it was applied to the commensuration of knowledge. It allowed quantitative comparison of the 'intellectual capacity' of one person against another. It established ordinal grades which intellectual workers carried with them to the labour market, and which provided a basis for employment and for wage differentials for those employed. A whole science of examinations developed - called Dossimology - which aimed to make these systems of examination more efficient. As a Standards Institute or a Trade Association might stamp a physical commodity with its seal of approval, so the nationally organised examination systems stamped their intellectual workers with guarantees of quality. Quality was quantified. From the particular attributes of any individual a more abstract quality was derived in order that the market for intellectual labour could function. Examinations in short are intimately linked to systems of wage labour.

11. As a means of measuring and grading intellectual labour, examinations also came to perform other functions:

- i) they acted a means of selection not only for future employers, but within the educational system itself. New exams had to be developed which measured the capacity to develop further conceptual capacity.

- ii) they provided certificates of attainment indicating the successful completion of a course seen as necessary to undertake a particular job (a Master Mariner's certificate for example is a requirement for anyone wishing to be considered for the post of captain of a large ship).

- iii) they become an instrument of control over students since they are the gateway to the privileges of technical labour. To pass an examination is to gain a passport to a zone of plenty. The promise of such benefits in the future for the few is sufficient to exert an individual discipline in the present over the many.

12. The competitive individualism of the capitalist school and its examination system is closely linked to the wage. Just as workers are employed individually so they are paid individually, even though they produce collectively. This fact has received relatively little attention in socialist thought, certainly in comparison to the primary relation of exploitation in capitalism, the private ownership of the means of production. It is notable too that revolutionary socialist governments have taken over the means of production from private capitalists, while leaving the individual wage relation as it is. But the moment that science becomes an independent force of production, the individual wage relation becomes of critical concern for socialists.

13. The reason is that the strict division between intellectual and manual labour means that this new social force of 'science' becomes the monopoly not just of the capitalist but of the intellectual workers the capitalist employs to produce this science. Whereas the capitalist captures the surplus labour of society as profit, the new technical workers take a share of this surplus labour through differential wages.

14. There are three reasons why technical labour tends to be paid more than manual labour. First the value of technical labour power is higher than simple labour power. More labour time goes into reproducing the technical labourer, notably educational labour time for which (in many countries) the technician does not pay. He or she then receives a wage

higher than is necessary to pay for the strict subsistence (rather than educational) costs of living. Secondly there are discontinuous returns to the application of scientific knowledge to production, and individual technicians are commonly able to sell their labour at a monopoly price because the capitalist cannot easily replace them. Part of a technicians knowledge is specific to a firm or project. It takes time for replacements to work themselves in. There may be a planned shortage of replacements (professional associations such as those in the medical profession often limit the number of new entrants into their trade in order to strengthen their monopoly position). Or particular individuals may have outstanding skills on which a firm's competitiveness depends. All these factors induce capital to share their profit with technical labour in the form of high wages (and even shares). Thirdly, pay differentials between intellectual and manual workers are a device used by capital to sustain the allegiance of technical labour against the manual labour which their knowledge is serving to control. This is one part of a grading system which acts as a discipline on those who accept the promise of future promotion in return for current conformity.

15. Within capitalism the power and wealth of technical labour will always be bounded by capital itself. But in societies where private capital has been abolished, the preservation of the wage relation and the division of head and hand can lead to a new class relation based on the political economy of knowledge. The monopoly of conceptual capacity replaces the monopoly of the physical means of production as a primary relation. Instead of the inheritance of property we find the inheritance of this conceptual capacity through the socialising experience of the 'intellectual' family. Instead of profits we find differential wages. Just as capital's class monopoly was realised through the sale of commodities on the market, so the intellectual's class monopoly is realised through the sale of individual labour power on the market.

16. Capitalism has summoned this new intellectual class into existence to act as its (capital's) collective head in order to control labour's collective hand. Just as feudal absolutism fostered capitalism in order to strengthen its traditional power, only to be overthrown by the force it had created, so capital itself is now threatened by the new technical workers who - though privileged in relation to manual workers - remain wage labour for capital. Only with the destruction of private capital can their class project develop to the full.

17. There is no necessity for the rule of the intellectuals to replace the rule of capital. The significance of the NYS is that it is trying to overcome the conditions which allow such a new class rule to develop. It has committed itself to breaking down the division between head and hand by uniting education and production, and by insisting that all children should develop their manual as well as their intellectual skills. It is clear, however, that education is part of a wider system. There is a direct line running from the division of mental and manual labour in capitalist production, to an individual labour market and the differential wage, to examinations and grading, and finally to the division of intellectual and manual education itself. To attack only the last of these is like trying to kill a snake by cutting off its tail - making the serpent more angry than before. What use is the NYS - capitalists will say - when it produces technicians who waste their time in manual work, and manual workers who ask for equal wages and a share in the running of the show? What education is this - say the parents from the old ruling class - which does not allow our children to train as an educated elite, and return with foreign diplomas to the privileges of technical labour? The point is real. A contradiction is being produced between the NYS and the labour market, one which must be forseen and whose outcome pre-empted.

18. There are four fronts which are important if the principles of the NYS are to win out against the capitalist divisions of the wider society rather than being eroded by them. They are the distribution of income, the examination system, the sale of individual labour for an individual wage, and finally the division between head and hand in the capitalist labour process.

19. As far as distribution is concerned, the government has taken a major initiative to reduce income inequalities, including those based on divisions between head and hand. In the state sector the ratio of the lowest to the highest salaries has been cut from 1:21 to 1:12 between 1976 and 1980 and the aim is to reduce it further to 1:8 over the next few years. In 1979 a first step was taken to encourage a similar reduction in differentials in the capitalist sector. Jobs in the docks, hotel, retail, banking and construction industries were related to 'equivalent' work in the state sector, and a schedule of comparable wages established. This has strengthened Trade Union negotiating power, as has the legislated minimum wage, and the guarantee of work.

20. Against the background of the history of inequality in the Seychelles this is a remarkable achievement. But there are two limitations to its overall effect in breaking down the wider divisions we have been discussing. First, the differentials of wages (and power) between intellectual and manual workers is still significant so that the incentive remains for a minority to mould the educational system towards the formation of a distinct intellectual class. Second, the continued existence of a practical division between head and hand in capitalist production, coupled with a free labour market, will always tend to undermine wage equality. If qualified technical labour is needed, and is harder to substitute than manual labour, then capital will find ways of giving wage premia and fringe benefits above the limits of government codes. In this sense the inequalities in distribution reflect real divisions in production. The hard economic laws of the labour market will then appear as constraints on progressive attempts to secure wage equality. Of course these hard laws are not really laws at all.

They are reflections of a particular way in which labour is educated, allocated and used by capital, which are no more eternal than the capitalist control of production itself. All we need note is that limits will be placed on the extent to which wage equality can be achieved as long as individual wage labour and the real division between head and hand in qualification and production remain.

21. This chapter has been concerned with the economic pressures which bear down upon the NYS, in particular those that come from the labour market. The NYS is necessarily part of a wider system for the reproduction of labour power, and has been consciously set up in contradiction to other parts of this system. In the next two chapters we want to look at these other parts and consider how the NYS can help to transform them. The first deals with the examination system, at the interface of education and work. The second considers the wage system and the division between head and hand in capitalist production itself.

Chapter 8

Towards a new form of examination

1. In the Seychelles the traditional examination system was directed primarily towards the future workers by brain. Seychelles College and Regina Mundi were the two main schools where the intellectual elite would be formed. Hence entry to them was carefully controlled. Those children who paid for their primary education at the two schools had a semi-automatic entry into the secondary streams. But those with primary education in the state schools had to take an exam at the end of Form 2 to gain entry to the two private secondary schools. The successful were then tutored for Ordinary and Advanced level examinations set by Cambridge, and on this basis a small number were selected for further education overseas. In 1979 there were 253 candidates for O level (the majority from Seychelles College and Regina Mundi) of whom 48 went on to Form 6. In the same year 37 students took A level, of whom about half achieved good enough results to go on to University, (in 1977 the number of A level passes was 22, and in 1978 21). The final production of a score of university candidates was enough to determine the pattern of the major secondary schooling in the country, and could not but affect the pattern of primary education as well.

2. For the rest, those entering the Technical school are required to take an entrance test, and work towards a London City and Guilds certificate. Those who successfully complete the course (two years in the school and one at work) can in the words on one report "generally expect a wage which starts at 600 rupees and rises to about 1,000-1,200 in two years". In 1980 there were over 200 students at the Technical school and more than 550 students at the other vocational schools. The latter operate their own selection and evaluation procedures.

3. The NYS has already broken with the selection system by committing itself to take all who wish to come. Everyone is given an assessment test before they arrive, in part to determine those who need remedial help in academic subjects. The crucial question - particularly

now that Regina Mundi has been wound up and Seychelles College is due to close by 1983 - is what form of assessment should be made at the end of the NYS. The broad outlines of the government policy are clear. Cambridge O level is to be abolished and replaced by a national examination system. This is an important step. It opens the way to breaking with an international measure of attainment, and thus with an international educational and labour market. It also puts power over the examination system into the hands of the government. But how should this power be used? What would constitute a socialist examination system at this point of time, or are examinations incompatible with socialist education in any circumstances?

4. It is here that we should recall the functions of examinations in capitalist society: measurement and grading, selection, tests of attainment, and control within education. Of these only the assessment of attainment seems to us compatible with a socialist education. There will be some skills which it will be necessary to show one has mastered before being allowed to practice them widely. The driving test is an example, or an air pilot's final assessment. In these cases incompetence endangers others. There is also a case for providing some form of social assessment as a stimulation to one's learning, and as a way of receiving an external view of one's level of achievement. An optional music exam would be an example, or a set of aptitude tests designed to guide a student in what he or she should concentrate upon. The point here is that the tests are voluntary. They are only one of a number of ways of providing an incentive, or a feedback on aptitude. Neither further education, job or future income would depend on such tests. They are related to individual development (or in the case of collective tests, the development of a group).

5. As far as selection is concerned, there is an ambiguity. There are two opposite poles of possibility. On the one hand there need be no conflict about access to further education or to particular jobs. Students will be able to do what they want to do. In 1980 for

instance the Seychelles Government sent all P9 leavers a questionnaire asking them what they wanted to do. All who said they wanted to go on to further academic education were accepted at Seychelles College or Regina Mundi, regardless of their academic achievement. Those who wanted to enter vocational training could do so, though some had to accept their second (and even third) choices of specific skills according to the availability of places. There was no sense that those most successful in exams would have priority. At the other pole, we have a situation where there is competition for few places, and where selection is made primarily on the basis of exam results.

6. The first of these poles should be the aim of a socialist system of 'allocating' students at any point in their education. Reducing the vertical division of labour, and the hierarchy of wages will be one way of reducing competition for certain privileged jobs. When there is a non-coincidence between the tasks necessary for social reproduction and the preferences of the students with respect to their part in the horizontal division of labour, then there are a number of possibilities. The less popular tasks can be subdivided among many people rather than having to be done by a few (the principal of 'sharing the chores'). Or there can be a rotation system, with the timing of the rotation decided by lot, and this can also apply to some of the more popular occupations. Some of the conflicts are soluble within groups, initially unattractive jobs gaining more significance when they are undertaken within a collective. In general the principle of reducing fragmentation and hierarchy in the labour process, and of freeing workers from the prison of specialisation will reduce the weight placed on selection during and at the end of formal education.

7. But where conflict still remains there is a case for retaining some kind of assessment system independent of the particular influence of primary economic and political power. In the 19th. century

examinations in Europe were progressive in the sense they substituted an 'objective' measure of attainment for a system of preferment based on political and social patronage. Just as the market freed both capital and labour from feudal ties, so examinations broke with feudal allocation in education; and just as there is a case for a measure of market relations in a transitional economy as a limit to the use of centralised power against labour, so there is a case for some form of assessment independent of particular political influence within the educational system.

8. There are reasons, then, for keeping a system of assessment. As the government have quite rightly decided, it should be a national system. It should be given much less significance in the political economy of knowledge than was the Cambridge O level. It should also assess a much wider set of accomplishments than the individual mastery of academic subjects:

- the ability to work in a team (collective not merely individual skills)
- to think objectively and creatively about daily life (theory)
- to carry a project to completion (practise)
- to understand the social in the natural and the general in the specific

9. To this end assessment should:

- take place periodically rather than being continuous. Continuous assessment tends to make the system overbearing on the daily life of the student (significantly the French refer to continuous assessment as 'control continue de connaissance')

- be collective as well as individual.
- encourage portfolios of production, including things made, diaries, minutes of meetings, proposals, photographs of their own and other's work, tapes, as well as research studies, letters, plans, newspapers, teaching materials, poems, and so on. This follows the model of art and architectural assessment, rather than academic examinations.
- aim at substantial information not grades which permit individuals to be quantitatively compared. A student will leave the NYS not with a certificate but with his or her individual and group portfolio with the comments of the assessors.
- be undertaken by a panel which includes students (one from each section), teachers, amateurs, co-ordinators and external assessors.
- take place annually.
- be seen as a stage in production, with items from the portfolios being forwarded for publication, general discussion, exhibition, broadcasting, and integration into the planning procedure for the following year.
- involve an oral discussion of the portfolio open to all.
- have the spirit of a festival, a period by which one aims to complete and circulate one's work, a period of mutual discovery and consolidation.

10. The key point is that in devising its assessment procedures the NYS should aim to break with a system of selection and allocation which depends on abstract, quantitative gradings. Its aim should not be to provide a mark which may be used to assign positions within a system of hierarchy, privilege and control. Rather it should offer specific remarks, geared primarily at helping the student or group, and which would serve as an encouragement to complete projects, to ask questions rather than prepare stock answers to the questions of others, to initiate rather than conform. Above all by breaking with comparable grading it will prevent the inequalities which exist within capitalist production in the country enforcing its priorities on the educational life of the NYS.

11. There remains then the question of A level. As with O level the government has taken the decision to do away with the Cambridge system, and instead attention has shifted to the merits of the International Baccalauriat. This is modelled on the French system, but has been developed to cater primarily for the children of the international salariat (diplomats, United Nations personnel; international managers and so on.) though its organisers have hopes that it will be adopted by a few Third World governments. Its main advantage from the viewpoint of the individuals who take it is that it provides a recognised certificate for those wishing to continue in diverse systems of further education in advanced capitalist countries.

12. The arguments for adopting a system of this sort in the Seychelles are as follows. The country, being small, cannot provide adequate further education. Those jobs requiring a university or advanced Polytechnic training can only be filled by Seychellois if Seychellois children are able to study abroad. To do so they will have to acquire the equivalent of a Cambridge A level, preferably the International Baccalauriat which avoids the Seychelles becoming dependent on any one metropolitan country.

13. The arguments against it are in part those rehearsed in relation to O level and its academic equivalents. It would encourage the division of intellectual and manual education, and an intellectual education in part geared to the reproduction of a separate technical strata in production. By providing a passport to key jobs, and a system of grading, it would become a means of control for those who had the chance of success, and a cause of alienation among those who felt they did not. Given the demands made by an international examination of this kind on the student - long hours of specialised academic work over a period of years - it would demand a concentration of scarce resources on the very few who (on past results) would succeed, and a diversion of the earlier years of the educational system towards a specialised academic learning.

14. There is a further point. The fact that the International Baccalauriat is internationally recognised automatically brings those who succeed in passing it onto the international labour market. Whether they enter immediately or after a period of studying for a higher degree does not matter. What is important is that the Seychelles is now having to compete against international salaries and conditions for the few nationals who have undertaken further education. Some restrictions may be placed on such people. For example the Seychelles requires students accepting a scholarship for study abroad to undertake to return to work for the government for a period equal to the length of time of overseas study. The student also has to name a guarantor who agrees to repay the full cost of the scholarship if the student fails to return.

15. Although this system appears to be effective (only 8% of the 172 students training in the UK between 1977-79 failed to return to the Seychelles after finishing their courses) the pull of overseas employment will assert itself the moment the bonding period has ceased. This is particularly so in professions like accountancy and medicine. In spite of a regular flow of students to study these subjects overseas (in

1978 there were 10 studying accountancy and 13 studying medicine) there are only 5 Seychellois doctors practising in the country (in 1980) and a similar number of accountants (1978 figure). Overall between 1975 and 1979 859 Seychellois emigrated from the country permanently, as much as a third of them being people who had acquired their technical skills overseas. It is significant, too, that the rate of emigration has risen significantly after the revolution (370 or 43% of the total for 1975-79 left in 1979 alone) as the new government began to limit accumulation by professionals at the expense of labour.

16. What is at issue here is the continued creation of a professional class who have gained their qualifications overseas, who have often been hostile to the new regime, and who by virtue of their internationally marketable skills and freedom of movement - are able to bid up their salary levels in the Seychelles to levels comparable with those of similar professions in capitalist countries. It is clear from recent Seychelles experience that the acquisition of skills through overseas training is not simply a technical matter (as the Manpower Planners would have it). It is a question of class, and all those who argue for the continuation of some form of internally recognised A level equivalent examination as a condition for the acquisition of skills by Seychellois students are in effect arguing for the reproduction of a class hostile to socialism.

17. Can the necessary skills be developed without being embodied in such an adverse class? One possibility would be to send students overseas to socialist countries, and gear the Seychellois 'qualifications' to that. With economic systems in which the international mobility of labour is planned rather than being left to the capitalist labour market, it would then be possible to organise reciprocal movement so that a Seychellois who wished to widen his/her experience by practising elsewhere could be replaced by someone with similar skills from the partner country. The wage premia for skilled workers are

less in socialist than in capitalist countries, thus reducing the international pressure for high differentials in the Seychelles. The only problem is that in most socialist countries there is still a marked division between intellectual and manual labour in production, and a corresponding form of higher education. ☁

18. A second possibility would be to develop at least some of the skills by apprenticeship and practice rather than by the studying for a diploma. An architect for example might be trained in a progressive practice overseas, whose members could be integrated into the development of architecture in the Seychelles, visiting the country, participating in local projects, teaching, and supervising the training of the few architects required by the Seychelles over the next decade. The student would attend a package of courses - in Technical colleges for example where formal qualifications are not required - but the overall aim of the training would be practical capacity not a diploma.

19. Third the bonding system could be extended even further than it has been or linked to the development of skills within the context of a co-operative. The latter would encourage but not ensure that the student trained overseas saw the education received as a collective rather than an individual enrichment, an attitude which the NYS will hopefully foster.

20. Lastly it would be quite possible for The Seychelles government to decide to rely on expatriates for certain skills. It is not a question of any expatriates, but progressive ones, willing to support the development of the new society in The Seychelles and work for the spreading rather than the restriction of their skills. Mozambique has pursued this aspect of international socialist co-operation with considerable success, drawing particularly on progressive technicians who face discrimination and alienation within metropolitan capitalism. There are some difficulties with this course: of language, culture, and identity. But these are not insurmountable. What is central is that self reliance should be defined above all in class rather than national terms. A plan which envisages continued relations with progressive

overseas skilled workers is a practical step towards the building of international socialist class co-operation. On the other hand a plan which fails to distinguish either Seychellois or expatriates by their class commitment will in the end tend to reproduce a reactionary class which - if it does not get its way politically - will commonly emigrate with the very skills for which they were initially favoured.

21. In the end the most important point about the International Baccalauriat is not its significance in constituting an international labour market for skilled Seychellois labour. It is that it will affect profoundly the type of education which is given to these students. Much of the content of higher education can be analysed as contributing towards the development of control rather than of expanding productive capacity. It has more to do with reproducing particular class relations of production than with developing the forces of production. Moreover, many professions - medicine, architecture, economics, teaching (training for these alone accounts for half of overseas training courses taken by Seychellois in 1978) - are profoundly social, but are by and large taught as though the social was technical. In all these cases further education is required to develop necessary skills, but it is an education which should integrate the technical with the socialist practice of the daily life of the NYS.

22. Any assessment system should reflect this commitment. It should build on the principles we discussed above as a replacement to O' level. It should be a national system of assessment geared to the internal type of education to which the government is committed. If it encourages the creativity, commitment and breadth which is too often curbed by traditional capitalist education, then we would expect progressive institutions abroad to welcome rather than freeze out new Seychellois students. To pursue instead a policy of switching from Cambridge to the International Baccalauriat would be simply repainting the Trojan Horse of capitalist education, rather than driving it away.

23. Those parents who hope that their children will be among the 20 annual qualifiers for overseas universities will favour the introduction of the International Baccalauriat. But for the great majority committed to the overcoming of the division of intellectual and manual labour, it is crucial that intellectual skills should not be developed separately from production, that the workers by head should not be educated separately from the workers by hand, and that any system of assessment should be constructed to serve these purposes and the liberation of all rather than provide a means of limiting access to privileges for the few.

Chapter 9

The NYS and the Co-operative Economy

1. The change from capitalist examinations to socialist assessment may insulate the NYS from the direct influence of the capitalist labour market, but it will not do away with the contradiction. The introduction of NYS leavers as labourers within the capitalist labour process cannot but create the sharpest of tensions. Capitalist forces will demand the restoration of examinations, and new disciplines of the young, by which they would mean discipline as a preparation for the specific controls of capitalist production. Instead of influencing education indirectly through examinations, we can expect direct political pressure to restore a labour force adequate to their needs. For if the vision of the NYS is realised, one thing which will not be produced is a group of young people who will willingly become wage workers for capital.

2. As long as capitalist relations exist, both in the process of production and in the hiring of labour, the pressures for a complementary education will continue also. How then can this be changed? To begin with, it will be difficult if not impossible to restore the unity of intellectual and manual labour, and to overcome the hierarchies, the divisions and the tendency to de-skilling so long as capitalist relations of property remain. Why should workers labour co-operatively if the benefits of these improvements are appropriated by capital? Why should they raise productivity and suggest innovations from their experience if the gains go to others, and the losses (in terms of unemployment, de-skilled work) are born largely by them? It is not a question of capitalists of good will as against racketeers. It is a question of the tendencies of capitalism as a system. As the result of competition even the most enlightened capitalist will be forced in the end to adopt the profound principles of capitalist relations, wage minimisation, productivity increases and the control of labour.

3. What is required then is a socialist sector, one which is founded on alternative principles of production and circulation, one which is complementary to the NYS not antagonistic to it. The basis for such an

alternative economy already exists, in part in the developing co-operative movement, in part in those spheres of production administered by the state.

4. The SPPF has always had a commitment to co-operatives. After the revolution they immediately acted to put this commitment into practise.

The National Development Plan for 1978-82 stated:

"It is Government's views that as production and marketing become more organised the co-operative movement will play an increasingly dominant role in the farm sector. Within the limited resources available to it, Government will offer particular encouragement to those societies concerned with credit, handicrafts and agricultural production and processing."

Seminars were organised to train people for co-operation, to develop co-operative education in schools and school co-operatives. The perspectives were those of an alternative economy. "A co-operative is an association of persons. It is not an association of capital." It replaces conflict with co-operation. It encourages teamwork rather than individualism. It acknowledges that "all kinds of work have their value, none is inferior to the other". It is democratic and not authoritarian. It can spread as a system of economy to all spheres of life: to industrial production as well as to agriculture; to fishing as well as to transport; to banking as well as to distribution and consumption. At each point the principles of co-operation could be contrasted with capitalism. Indeed a system of dual economics would be seen developing in practice; on the one hand a capitalist economy, the husk of the old society, on the other hand co-operation, the seed of the new.

5. It is here that a word of caution is in order. For more than a century there has been a bitter struggle within capitalism over co-operatives. In Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century, co-operative factories spread. Marx hailed them as transitional forms from the capitalist mode of production to what he called the 'associated' mode. Co-operatives grew, also, in wholesaling and retailing, in banking and insurance, in the country as in the town. The visions of a co-operative system of economy replacing capitalism have much in common with those of the socialist government in the Seychelles. In Britain an alliance of private capital, social democrats and the liberal state cauterised these visions. They passed laws limiting

the scope of co-operation, controlling its forms, channelling it into spheres which did not threaten the accumulation of capital.

6. In the 1970's the same alliance began promoting co-operatives. New laws were passed, and new agencies set up. Programmes have been drafted - with the support of elements of private capital - to replace capitalist factories with co-operative ones. Personnell managers fill aeroplanes to visit co-operatives in Spain built up in the interstices of Franco's Fascism. Throughout the third world, the World Bank and the national aid agencies have encouraged co-operatives - on the land, in processing, in finance and marketing. What is at issue is the control of labour. In northern factories as on southern plantations capital has foundered on that irrepressible resistance of labour. One answer has been to develop new technology. Another to withdraw from the direct control of production and hand it over to the state (in sugar, in tea and in rubber), to the producers themselves as smallholders or co-ops, or to semi-autonomous groups in the leviathans of industrial production. The slogan is self-management. But the practise could be more accurately described as neo-Fordism. Capital is now asserting control indirectly, through technology, through material inputs, or finance, or the monopoly of markets. The form of ownership and immediate control may change. But the pressures of competition, to increase productivity, and to accumulate capital all remain. The law of capitalist value appears no longer dressed as an employer but in the guise of a banker, a sales agency or a consulting technician. Is it then a surprise to find state enterprises which employ wage labour and reproduce the divisions and hierarchies of the capitalist labour process, or co-operatives who pay great tithes of their profit in interest, commission and rent?

7. All this indicates that simply changing the form of ownership is not enough. In the conditions of modern international capitalism, such a change is a necessary but certainly not a sufficient condition for developing 'the associated mode of production'. Put another way we can distinguish between capital's co-operatives and a socialist co-operative economy. Such an economy would be one which differed from capitalism not just in its forms of ownership and control, but in all aspects of its social and economic relations. In Chapter 5 we discussed a socialist economy as it might operate within the NYS. In the next section we extend the discussion

to the wider co-operative economy to which the NYS would in part be geared.

The co-operative economy

1. Relations of property.

8. Traditionally production co-ops have been owned by those who labour not by those who advance the capital. This is their first and major difference to capitalist concerns. What it implies is that the rights to profit, and to those other powers which ownership confers (management, selling, disposal of assets, hiring and firing) are exercised by all those directly involved in the economic process and not by a limited few.

9. There is an ambiguity, however, about where the line of direct involvement should be drawn. Should consumers have a say for example (as they do in retail co-ops), or neighbours, or members of the workers' families? The point is important because there is a danger that a production co-op, owned and controlled solely by its workers would retain a certain collective individualism. Its goals would be the maximisation of benefits to its members. The profits would be theirs by right. They could decide to move the plant regardless of the local consequences. They could use their waste to pollute a stream, just as any capitalist firm does. In short there would still be a separation of the private and the public, of self-interests and the interests of all, of us and them. It is important, therefore, to consider how any co-op could blend in these wider interests so that the co-op itself took on a social perspective and not merely a private one.

10. One possibility would be to lodge some powers in an annual assembly of the co-op. This would be composed not only of the workers, but of delegates from the towns and villages of the country, from certain government departments, and from the immediate neighbourhood within which the co-op worked. This assembly would control what could be called the Social Contribution, a local state fund to finance co-ops for products and services which cannot be sold on the market. Approval of the

contribution would take into account the quality of the co-op's product, or the provisions it had made for the families of its workers, or for the training of its apprentices. The assembly might also be charged with approving certain other decisions, such as a major change in the type of production, in the sale of major assets, or in the quantity of employment. Through means such as these, the workers of the co-ops would retain control of their immediate production, but would be encouraged to consider how their unit was serving not just themselves but labour in general.

11. The word property derives from the Latin word to own. It implies private control, and reflects a world of commodity production and individual interests. Instead then of considering forms of socialist property, or collective ownership - both of which are something of a contradiction in terms - perhaps we should think in terms of relations of stewardship, or administration, relations which ensure an autonomy for the direct producers, but an autonomy which is exercised on behalf of all.

2. Relations in production.

12. Transforming the relations of the labour process has been one of the principal tasks set in the NYS, and already one of the village's striking achievements. The differences between the capitalist and socialist production process have already been summarised in Table 8. Breaking down hierarchy, the vertical division of labour, and the fragmentation and de-skilling of tasks has been a feature of the daily practice in the NYS. The co-ops should follow the same principles, combining intellectual and manual labour, collectivising skill and the control of technical knowledge, rotating tasks and responsibilities which are key to the operation. Some of the conditions for such new relations to be workable have to be developed before production starts, and it is here that the time and resources of the NYS are of central importance for the wider co-operative economy.

3. Relations of distribution and the labour market.

13. The co-op would also move beyond the wage form. The wage is an exchange of money and an individual's labour power. The payment of an individual wage and the freedom of that individual to move jobs is the basis for the inequality of income between intellectual and manual labour. Because of its structure the co-op could provide alternatives to these features of the capitalist labour market. First, in a co-op, labour would not be hired individually but rather associated collectively. Second, members need not be paid individual wages but share out a subsistence fund from the co-op's income. The precise formula will vary in practice. Other socialist organisations of this kind have followed the principle of equal wages for all, plus premia for those in particular need. There is currently a strike in one of the major weekly magazines in Britain (Time Out) because of the owner's attempt to break the system of equal wages decided on and operated by the workers for the last ten years. The important thing is that the decision on distribution should be made by the collective and not by individual market forces. Thirdly such a system must allow for changes in the labour force, old workers leaving the co-op and new workers coming in. Swopping with other co-ops would be one possibility. Training replacements during the resigning worker's period of notice would be another. New workers could perhaps join for trial periods as 'novices' before becoming full members of the co-op. Increasingly we would expect co-ops to develop apprenticeships linked in to the NYS and the Technical schools, which would provide sources of new labour.

14. Although the continued existence of a free labour market outside the co-operative sector would mean that skilled people might be attracted away from the co-ops by the offer of higher wages, there would be a limit to such a drain. The bonding system whereby those who want to leave have to find or help train a replacement is one limit. Each worker would have some stake in the co-operative sector (pensions, access to collective provisions, and to further education) which would be lost if he or she left

the capitalist sector. The attack on the capitalist division of head and hand, would, we believe, help to make the work of mental as well as manual labour more satisfying. Much intellectual (conceptual) labour has itself come under the iron laws of the capitalist labour process: specialisms proliferate and become too narrow; many are deskilled by new software, (see the experience of computer programmers, for example, over the last ten years). Hierarchies open up. For these reasons we think that the co-ops will be shielded from the effects of the capitalist labour market, and that they will be able to dispense with a policy of grading whose main function is internal control.

15. So much for wages. There is also the question of the surplus product. Here the models of enterprises in the post-revolutionary countries offer good guidelines. Part may be retained for the expansion of the co-op's production; part should be channelled to the central fund of the co-operative sector; part to finance development within the area in which the co-op is located; and finally part could be a contribution to the State budget.

4. Relations in circulation.

16. The co-ops would be selling their output on the market, but it is important that the new sector does not fall into the relations of the capitalist sector to the market - namely maximising income regardless of the methods used or quality of the product sold. Rather than strictly separating production from the consumption of labour the co-ops should consider ways of re-uniting them. In some cases they could encourage new forms of consumption (a Publishing co-op might arrange collective reading and discussion of its books and newspapers for example). It could act as teacher and guide, in the sale of new building materials for instance, or new inputs for farming, or in the case of food processing could give nutritional classes and explanations about the political economy and dangers of capitalist food. One of the key roles

of the Annual Assembly is to allow consumers (in the form of local district representatives) to comment on the product, as a use value. Capitalist marketing and market research fulfills some of these functions, but mainly individually. Few are the cases where capitalists encourage collective assessment and judgement on their output. Nor do we know of cases where part of the price is paid collectively at an annual assembly as a Social Contribution on the basis of a co-op having fulfilled its duties to consumers as a socialist producer of use values.

5. Financial relations.

17. Co-operative experience elsewhere suggests that a key question is what kind of money the productive units depend on. First there is capitalist money. It is capitalist in as much as it represents money capital which demands self expansion, and a discipline on the borrower if this financial target is not met. The main function of a bank is to earn its own rate of return and secure its assets. This is the model being suggested by those arguing for a transformation of capitalist firms into co-operatives in Western Europe: they favour co-operative firms dependent on capitalist money.

18. By way of contrast we can consider socialist money. This takes a number of different forms specific to their functions. In post revolutionary societies, for example, there is usually one form of money for workers to buy their subsistence goods (the need for a medium of circulation). There is another form of credit money which is used for accounting in the productive sector. The latter does not take an independent form (as coin or notes) but exists merely in a ledger. It is a way of accounting between the units, who continue to produce not because they make such and such a profit but because they play a part in the overall socialist plan.

19. In the case of the co-operative sector in the Seychelles we are talking about money of this second kind. What the new co-ops require is credit money. This should be provided by a central co-operative bank, from funds furnished by individual savings, state contributions, and donations from the co-ops that are already producing. The credit

would not be at interest, but should finally be paid back in real terms as should the savings deposited in the Bank. Once again the aim is to break the close link with the capitalist market, in this case the financial market which enforces the capitalist law of value in its most direct way. Nothing would be more ill-advised than to saddle the new co-ops with capitalist loans, whose annual demands would enforce a discipline as severe as if more discrete than that of the productive capitalist himself.

6. Relations of reproduction.

20. The change in the social relations of production makes possible changes in the social relations of reproduction. In capitalism the two tend to be strictly separated. Child care, education and health - to take three branches from the sphere of reproduction - tend to be carried on in institutions (and places) set apart from capitalist factories. One example is the family. For some it has been a haven, for others (particularly women) a prison. When women have gone out to work, too often they have had to work a double day - one in the factory, another at home. Few capitalist firms (except in times of acute labour shortage) have provided ways to lighten a woman worker's load: through day care of children, cheap meals for the family, or collective laundrettes. The new socialist government has already taken remarkable steps to correct this situation, notably through the establishment of creches throughout the country. But it will clearly be open to the co-ops to contribute further to these initiatives: seeing their responsibility extending not just to labour as labour power, but to the health and welfare of the workers and their families. Women should feel able to go out to work without taking on the burden of the double day. They, too, should be able to train for productive work in the co-op, to take time off for travel to advanced factories abroad, confident that their children were well cared for in their absence. Flexible hours (and

weeks) both for women and spouses would allow for the fluctuations in the domestic economy (children's illness, or holidays). Such arrangements would be encouraged once the satisfaction of needs rather than the minimisation of wages had become the loadstar of this organised production.

21. As far as education is concerned, the erosion of the class monopoly of knowledge within the co-operatives opens up new possibilities for the relation of education, research and production. First in as much as production depends on the continual application of the capacity to objectify, then this capacity must be reproduced, as must its practical applications. With the co-ops, the seminar can shift from the school to the factory. Secondly, the rotation of jobs will require re-training facilities. Thirdly, production itself will be a school: for those who work in it as for the youth preparing to work. Thus in the same way as production has been re-integrated into education in the NYS, so in the co-operative sector, education can be re-integrated into production. The old division of the ages between the years of education and the years of work will be broken down. Instead will emerge an 'education permanente'.

7. Relations with the state

22. Co-operatives of the kind we have discussed - though social in perspective - are not of course state enterprises. They would not be subject to the direct authority of the Government. The government would be represented in the Annual Assembly, but could no more intervene in the internal affairs of a particular co-operative than they could in those of a private company.

23. Yet while the capitalist sector remains both inside and outside the country (as well as the political forces that go with it) the co-operative sector will depend heavily on the protection of the state. Capital will tend to have greater experience, greater scale, more advanced technology, and a financial capacity to cut prices in order

to reduce the co-operators. In order to give the new forms a chance to grow, the state should reserve certain sectors for them, provide tariff protection and controls against foreign imports, as well as ample credits to the Co-operative Bank. This then is one task for the state, with its customary powers of intervention in the circulation of money and commodities, to favour the new mode in its economic war with the capitalist law of value.

24. Secondly, where possible the state should integrate its own economy into that of the co-operative sector. If a school needs exercise books, it should look first to the co-operative printers. If the hospital needs new beds it should first ring the co-operative joiners. If the army needs new boots, then that should be work for the co-operative boot and shoe factory. Such specialised purchasing was used very successfully against foreign capital by the Chinese from 1949-52.

25. Thirdly, the government can begin to transform its own relations in production. It can, for example, break down some of the divisions between intellectual and manual labour, particularly in certain departments and among those recruited from the NYS. A number of countries (Ethiopia is one instance from close by) involve their workers in periods of regular political discussion. These and educational sessions about how to develop the departments are one possibility. Another would be the encouragement of sabbaticals, of job rotation, or more equal salaries, and of some participation in manual labour.

26. Another step which would help unify the co-operative and the state economies would be for the government to consider how to break with the individual wage form itself, and the hierarchy which goes with it. It would be best to start with those tasks which could be carried out

by team labour, trained and internally organised like a co-operative. Take the example of a new form of health in a district. This involves nurses, cleaners, dispensers, doctors, ambulance drivers, as well as those people whose jobs bear on health - the health inspector, the sanitary engineers, food shops and house persons. It would be quite possible for a team to be set up, which would plan their own division of labour and training, and which would be paid collectively. Such a scheme would certainly mean a lower salary for the doctor than would be normal had he or she sold their labour individually, but the counterweights would be there: the encouragement that a new social system was being built, that working with a group was above working for oneself, the feeling of comradeship which this engenders, the material benefits of co-operation from shared facilities, house-care and group education. The group might - as such a unit has done in one rural area in Bangladesh - set up a small factory to produce generic drugs at a fraction of the price of imported brand products, or run a shop for the sale of non-capitalist food. The Health bloc in the NYS would be the natural reservoir of ideas and teams prepared for such a project. Teams of this kind - and similar examples could be given for education, construction, or social welfare - could be thought of as Labour Associations.

27. Fourthly as the co-operatives move beyond the market, they will have the problem of synthesising the sector as a whole, planning their current production and their future development as well. The bank can play a role here, as a great junction of information and as a body which considers the whole and not just the parts. But the state, too, has a central place, charged as it is with the management of the national economy.

28. It is not a question of some strict vertical structure with a central co-ordinating state requiring powers to control individual units of production, but rather one of a state acting as an animateur,

encouraging co-operatives to synthesise their own activities. One organisational form this could take we will call a Council of Labour. Its main task would be the formation of economic plans for debate and decision in the People's Assembly. Rather than being based on geographical constituencies it would comprise delegates elected from the sectors of production: not only sectors producing for the market but state workers, agriculturalists, fishermen and those whose main work is in the home. In this way the co-operative economy would be planned as part of the whole national economy. It would be a planning coming from below, rather than being formulated by the 'public head' which then has to impose it on the 'private hand'. If furthermore this Council was charged with gathering financial contributions from the co-operatives to fund the economic expenditures of the state, a further step would be taken towards a horizontal complementarity between the state and the immediate producers. This is the meaning we can give to the notion of the withering away of the state. It cannot wither away while there are class forces hostile to the development of socialism in the Seychelles. What can wither away is any relation of domination of co-operative labour by the state.

29. One of the great challenges of socialist development has been to resolve the tension between the need for conscious economic synthesis (once planning replaces the market) and the necessity for the direct producers to feel an identity with their work. Some governments (Cuba in the 60's for example with the great campaign for sugar production) have tried to encourage the producers by getting them to identify with the national production targets. Others (and Cuba in the 70's was forced to this path) have had to offer individual financial incentives. In socialist agriculture the tension is reflected in the division between the collective farm and the private plot. These examples reflect the pressing reality of the tension, but do not resolve it. A co-operative economy of the kind we have discussed offers a pathway to resolution, combining as it does the social perspective of the state

with the small-scale autonomy of private property. As we have said some co-operatives have been little more than a collective private property. Others in some socialist countries have been another form of state farm (and have generated private plots accordingly). This is why it is not the name but the substance of the alternative social relations established which is central, and why we have tried to spell some of them out. There is even a case for changing the name to, for example, Producers Associations, in order to escape the capitalist version of co-operation which has become so prevalent in the 70's. Yet it is quite clear that the Seychelles government have been developing co-operation in its socialist form, as an alternative economy rather than individual co-operatives in a capitalist sea. It is this which is so important for the NYS, since it offers an economy which will focus and build on the work of the village rather than contradict all that the new education stands for.

8. Relations with the world economy.

30. Once the main issue is posed as one of a dual economics, with an economics of co-operation struggling against the capitalist law of value, the question of relations with the world economy can be addressed in class rather than national terms. In other words the distinction between national and international becomes less important than that between co-operation and the law of value. Certainly the international capitalist economy is a formidable enemy of the new co-operation, but the same is true of national capital in the Seychelles. The co-operative economy is opposed to both, and needs to be protected from both.

31. At the same time, there is a fund of co-operative experience abroad. Many of the products which are open to manufacture in the Seychelles are precisely those which in the advanced capitalist countries are run co-operatively or are linked into a co-operative (rather than a capitalist) circuit: shoes for example, building, food distribution, printing, publishing, banking, and retailing. Moreover, there is a

great strata of working people abroad who are inspired not by profits or wages but new social relations, who see the world not as a set of price tags, but in terms of the opportunities for associated production. The development of an international network of associators has already been pioneered within the NYS, and a similar reciprocal relation could be developed by the co-ops: socialist migrants to the Seychelles learning about the possibilities and difficulties of developing new forms of production, and in return contributing technical know-how where it is needed.

32. As with the movement of labour, so with the movement of goods: the international trade of the co-ops should aim where possible to be with co-operators and socialist enterprises abroad, where trade can be planned and use values exchanged, rather than with the fluctuating and antagonistic world market of capital.

The Co-operative economy and the NYS

33. These perspectives on co-operation clearly have much in common with those of the NYS. But the relation between the two is much more than the sharing of common aims. For each we suspect will be deeply dependent on the other for success. The NYS will be a seed-bed for the co-operatives. The co-operatives will provide conditions within which these seeds can grow.

34. The prospect of entering co-ops or labour associations would give a shape to the second year at the NYS quite different to that determined by a system of traditional exams. Students would be encouraged to consider future possible co-operatives: in terms of people and products. They would be able to begin their research and preparation for the new ventures, developing the general skills of co-operation, and the specific technical knowledge required for the product in question. This would be done in prospective teams. The resources, particularly the scientific resources of the NYS would be important at this stage, as would the advice and encouragement of fellow students who were not members of the group.

35. The importance of preparation of this kind is one of the principal lessons from the Mondragon co-operatives in the Basque region of Spain. Within twenty years this group of co-operatives grew to become the country's third largest exporter of manufactures, involving more than 80 co-operatives, and a labour force only marginally less than the total labour force of the Seychelles. The formation of a co-operative takes place as follows. A group of workers approach the central co-operative bank and say they wish to form a co-op. They may suggest a product they have in mind, or the bank may provide suggestions which its research points up as feasible. The bank - as the centre of information and research - then undertakes a detailed international study of the prospective branch of production, and identifies the most advanced process of production. The workers then visit the advanced plant, some may even take jobs there, while others prepare the specification of the new factory, place orders for the machinery and supervise construction. Such preparation commonly takes two years or more, but it means that when the plant comes into production, it will produce at maximum international efficiency, with workers who have mastered the new technology both in theory and practice. The period of preparation is funded by credit from the bank which is paid back out of profits (as well as the credit to cover each worker's original £2,000 stake in the operation).

36. In the Seychelles it is far from necessary to have the most modern plant in the world. It may be more advisable to buy cheap second hand plant, particularly if it is domestic needs which are to be serviced. There may be other sources of finance and technical aid that could be called on. A future labour association in Health for example could seek aid from WHO, for study travel abroad, and visits to health centres. The specialist training required by the group (the doctor, nurse, nutritionist) could be funded by national technical assistance

programmes. Progressive health workers and medical staff could be invited to the Seychelles to take part in the preparations, on the spot training, and initial guidance. The same could happen in a building co-operative, or labour association, with specialist skills of architecture, civil engineering, craftwork, and accounting all being developed in practical and theoretical apprenticeships at home and abroad. The important point is that whether the future project is a health team, a construction group or a brick factory, the specialist knowledge developed will be seen as a collective asset and not the monopoly property of the individual in whom the knowledge is embodied. It is not then the specific institutions and practices of Mondragon which are as important as the general insistence on a fully-funded period of preparation, a knowledge of international practice, and the collective development of specialist knowledge geared to the requirements of the chosen production.

37. The prior existence of the NYS gives the Seychelles a great advantage in the task of establishing a new co-operative economy. The capacity to think objectively about technical and social sides of production is one that all members of a co-op should have, and which the education of the NYS is encouraging all to develop. The same is true of certain administrative skills like basic accounting and book keeping, the construction of a cash flow, the ability to organise a meeting, to express a point clearly, to keep minutes and write short notes, and to conduct a survey. The NYS students are also learning the benefits and the difficulties of co-operation in practice, the ways in which the division between intellectual and manual labour can be overcome, and how to think socially and not just individually. These will continue in the second year, but it should also be possible to begin the more specialist preparation, to be carried on in the vocational schools, secondary schools, or in

apprenticeships in the year after the NYS. Different projects will have different lead times. Some could be started immediately after the NYS. Others may require a number of years training. But the sooner the preparations start, the more tailored can the second year of the NYS become.

38. Many of the items which could be produced in co-operatives are already being developed (or under consideration) at the NYS: the cultivation of crops and livestock, fishing and fish farming, construction and craft skills, cooking, and many cultural products. In this sense the NYS is already part (together with the other co-ops that have been set up) of the new co-operative economy. Its significance can be gauged by the fact that when the second year starts, the NYS will account for perhaps 10% of the total Seychelles labour force aged 15 and over.

39. These and other products suitable for development by the NYS, co-operatives and labour associations are listed overleaf. We will touch on only two. First, the development of a new form of guest house, geared to workers at home and abroad, and to young people and socialists from overseas. Expeditions, voyages, trails, collective work, introductions to the people's history of the Seychelles, new games, dancing and song - all these (quite apart from the cooking and housekeeping) are the very skills which the students of the NYS are now learning to the full.

Table 10

Possible sectors for the development of co-
operatives and labour associations.

1. Small industry

- box making for paints, powder, etc.
- soap
- copra and coconut fibre
- distillery
- tannery
- fruit and vegetable preserving
- saw mill
- brick and coral block factory
- paper-making
- printing and publishing
- fruit juice

2. Marine products

- fish farming
- fish meal
- cannery
- bait rearing
- shark skin curing
- boat repair
- salt panning

3. Agricultural products

- fruit and vegetables
- tropical plant rearing
- livestock
- eggs
- outer island development

4. Construction

- design teams (including architects, civil engineers,
draughtspeople)
- teams of craftspersons
- major works groups

5. Transport

- garages and car mechanics
- car hire
- haulage
- light aircraft

6. Leisure and cultural production

- bands and travelling music shop
- cultural groups (theatre, dance)
- photographers
- cinema-video (travelling) and international film production

7. Tourism

- new form of 'guest-house'
- expeditions, voyages, trails
- artisan products (woodcarving, copperwork, batique)

8. Services (for labour associations)

- health groups
- adult education groups

40. Secondly, the NYS leavers will be well prepared to develop co-operatives on the Outer Islands. A pilot scheme could be undertaken on a nearby island such as Silhouette, an island which has been ruthlessly exploited by a foreign consortium, mainly French. There is surely a strong case for removing these absentee owners, and arresting the decline in population and morale of the local inhabitants by introducing a group of post-NYS co-operatives to develop the island's agricultural and recreational potential.

41. Not all NYS leavers will want to enter a co-operative or labour association. But it is important that the possibilities exist for those who do. For otherwise there is a real danger that the demands of the capitalist labour market will increasingly conflict with the objects of the NYS. Capital will demand that the NYS be organised as a two

year apprenticeship for the capitalist economy. Is it not rather to be seen as a two year apprenticeship for co-operation? For this to happen the co-operative economy will have to expand. The NYS provides the foundation for this expansion. That is what makes the two so inter-dependent. The co-operative economy after all would extend the principles of the NYS from education to the productive economy. It is in this sense that the seed can become a flower.

Chapter 10

Beyond the Village

1. The NYS is a political project of a quite new kind. It recognises that the task of developing socialist relations is a creative one, not one of a state merely legislating blueprints for socialism. The state is rather than animateur, encouraging the necessary creativity as a gardener cares for her flowers. It provides some resources, some guidelines, and some protection against predators. But the life force is another matter. What the revolutionary government in the Seychelles has done is to see the youth as the most creative section of the society. They have been seen as less cumbered with capitalist culture than the adults, more open to new ways of seeing, and new ways of doing. The English romantic Shelley once wrote that poets were the unacknowledged legislators of the world. The youth of the Seychelles have been cast in this role, in the NYS, as poets of a new practice.

2. One criticism that could be made of such a project is that it places too heavy an emphasis on cultural revolution, rather than on economic and social revolution. Traditional socialist theory sees culture as an important area for political action (political education for example) but in addition to rather than in place of social and economic transformation. The argument runs that culture, including education, is determined by social and economic forces, rather than vice versa. In the earlier chapters we discussed the way in which the capitalist economy encroached upon the NYS through the examination system, and the way in which the NYS could insult itself from these pressures and indeed inspire changes in the economy itself. But there are equally social pressures, which take a political form. Can these too be resisted, and if so how?

3. The social pressures originate from the major divisions in Seychellois society: those of class, of gender, age and colour. In as much as the NYS is trying to overcome these divisions, it necessarily

meets opposition: amongst the parents of the rich who wish their children to be educated in the elite schools of the old regime, of the expanding technical class who stand to gain from the capitalist division of mental and manual labour, and who demand only that their children can compete freely for what they acknowledge as the prize of salaried privilege; of the parents who fear the loss of control of their daughter's sexuality.

4. Much of the initial opposition, reflected in the 1979 demonstrations, derived from these sources. The rich complained of the brainwashing of their children. Children in the elite schools resisted the NYS because it would involve manual labour. Parents claimed that their daughters would not be safe away from home, living in a co-educational village.

5. The government quite rightly avoided a direct conflict with these prevalent and deeply rooted forces by making the NYS voluntary. But with the abolition of Seychelles College and Regina Mundi, an element of restriction re-enters in the sense that the NYS becomes effectively the only road to further education, even though it is formally voluntary. What we may expect then is renewed pressure from the hostile forces to mould the NYS to their models of inequality, and to internalise in the project the very structures of capitalism which the NYS was set up to overcome. There are three main points at issue in this respect: examinations and formal education; discipline; and sex.

Discipline

6. Examinations and the division between intellectual and manual education we have already discussed. Some words are needed, however, on discipline and sex. During the August camp and in the initial months of the NYS itself, discipline was a keen subject of debate. There were many who argued that the adults should lay down detailed rules, and ensure through strict discipline that these were observed. Parents, it was suggested, expected a strict discipline, particularly at a time when parental control was breaking down in the wider society. Some saw the army as a model for the youth, and urged extensive periods of drill, much as the English public schools run para-military training as an alternative to organised sport.

7. The questions which must be asked about discipline are two: why is it that people do not obey rules and conform; and whose discipline is it that is being imposed. It is, of course, true that any collective does require co-operation and co-ordination among its individual members. The intensity of this requirement will vary, from friends in a party, to a football team, to a guerilla unit during an operation. In each case - as long as relations are equal and co-operative rather than hierarchical and dominating - practices will evolve. Those who stray from these practices (a drunk at a party, a footballer who refuses to pass) will be reminded of the common practices informally not through a trial on the basis of written rules. But when the relations are those of domination, then a refusal to accept the terms and practices of those in power can be progressive. Indeed the strategy of refusal has been one of the major weapons in working class struggle against capitalists: soldiering on the production line, sabotage of cars, lightening shop floor strikes, or working to rule. Children have also followed similar practices within the capitalist school system. In these cases the appeal to an abstract concept of discipline means rather the concrete practice of class control.

8. Within the NYS the danger of imposing discipline in the abstract is that it prevents the students' acts of refusal from themselves being a discipline on those in charge. Passivity, sulking, failure to attend classes, noise, smashing furniture are all ways of registering a comment on the meaning of the life the students are being asked to lead. They carry a message that needs to be listened to not crushed.

9. What is at issue then is the encouragement of mutual self-discipline rather than the insistence on individual submission to bourgeois authority. The contrast is not passive obedience as against individual anarchy, but collective self-determination as against individual conformity. Where the common task is clear and willingly taken on by the collective then a group will develop its own discipline. It does not need abstract rules imposed from outside the group. This has

certainly been true of the NYS experience to date. The problem arises only when discipline is imposed from above to carry out a project over which the majority of participants in the project do not have adequate control. The external pressure from parents on the NYS has been for discipline of this hierarchical kind. The NYS stands for co-operation among equal producers. Its task is to show that there are two disciplines not one, the first the self-discipline of the producers, the second the class discipline of the appropriators.

Sexuality

10. The question of sexual control is equally contested, principally along generational lines. Parents inside and outside the NYS have insisted on celibacy particularly for the girls in the village. The architecture and rules of the village reflect this position. As the NYS brochure says "The boys' and girls' dormitories will be completely separate". They may visit each other's dormitories only under the supervision of adults. In spite of this there is a commitment to co-education. "To learn to work with and respect members of the opposite sex should be one of the goals for students of the NYS" says the brochure, and this commitment is evident in the daily life of the village. But it is a commitment which stops abruptly at sexual relations.

11. This is the most sensitive issue in the construction of the NYS, fraught with contradiction and uncertainty. The sexual relations within adult Seychelles society have a relative liberalism and marked lack of hypocrisy. Yet a strict repression is enforced on both sexes in the village at the very moment of the growing sexual consciousness amongst the youth. Not only are restrictions placed on the movement of the adolescents within the village in order to keep the sexes apart. They are also imposed on their movements outside the village, visits home being limited to one day every fortnight. Similar restrictions on sexual relations are placed on the animateurs in the village, which has led to anxiety about the stability of their relationships with girl- and boy-friends outside.

12. We refer to this as contradictory because of the antagonism of two powerful forces. On the one hand the concern of adults, and particularly parents in the wider society, to control the sexuality of their teenage daughters. On the other, the sexual emotions of both teenagers and adults working in the village. What we know from experiences of such communities elsewhere is that the repression of these emotions is problematic to say the least. One common consequence is homosexuality. Another is covert sexual relations without contraception. The general control which is exercised over students - for example in their freedom to return home for whole weekends or Feast days - is felt as oppression and threatens to introduce an alienation of the youth in the project. The explosive consequences of sexual repression of the youth has been most fully analysed by the Austrian psychologist Wilhelm Reich, who discussed it in relation to, among other things, the youth communes of post-revolutionary Russia in the 1920's. He went so far as to suggest that the repression of sexual relations amongst the youth was the achilles heel of socialist youth projects of the kind exemplified in the NYS.

13. It is in sexual relations that the norms of the old class society - with its stress on virginity for class reproduction, inheritance, and status - have reached most deeply and contradictorily into the heart of the NYS. In the sphere of education, economy, politics and culture, the NYS has pioneered quite new modes of production. But it has failed to do so with respect to sexual relations.

14. As with discipline the answer lies with the children themselves. Those adults arguing for strict sexual regulation suggest that the alternative is sexual anarchy. But in progressive co-educational boarding schools in Europe this is far from the case. When given the responsibility teenagers have developed codes of sexual practice which might be seen as capturing the essence of socialism: mutual responsibility; loyalty; sensitivity; care over conception; discretion; love. They enforce their own codes in an informal way. Some are puritan, others more generous. Few reflect the double standards, asymmetry, brevity, and for many lack of fulfillment which are so grievously documented in the studies of sex and gender relations under capitalism.

Winning democratic support.

15. Discipline and sexuality are examples of the more general question of how the NYS can challenge social divisions of the wider society rather than reproduce them. The first thing to acknowledge is that there is a struggle. It is primarily a class struggle, but is overlaid with other divisions, of gender, age, and colour. If the NYS is to succeed in the face of the opposition it meets it has got to help unify the working people of the Seychelles behind the project and all that it leads to. The seed will develop into the flower only with their support.

16. Much has been done already in this respect. The SPPF have explained the political significance of the NYS throughout the Seychelles. Significantly the anti-government demonstrations in October 1979 were met by a working class demonstration in favour of the NYS. There is much popular support for the ending of elite schools and of the division of intellectual and manual labour in education. The success of the August camp was a propaganda of practice and was one of the main reasons for the high number of volunteers for the NYS when it started in February 1981. How can this democratic support for the NYS be maintained and expanded?

17. It goes without saying that the commitment of the children to the NYS is the foundation on which all else must be built. For the children are the voice of the NYS. The whole project is founded on a belief in the capacity of the youth to develop new social relations. They, too, will be the pioneers of the new relations in the wider society, the spokespeople, the educators. Where there are contradictions therefore it is paramount that they are worked through by the children - in discussion, through the democratic structures which the children must feel are their institutions, where they have control. New forms of democracy are important in the NYS not simply because they accord with socialist principle, but because in practice only through such democracy can the identification of the youth with the project be maintained.

18. Let us return to the subject of sexual relations. There is an important point that open sexual relations, pregnancy, abortions and so on would run in the teeth of the religious and social beliefs of much of the working class. This is a political fact which NYS students have to face. But how they face it, what strategies they adopt, what solutions they reach amongst themselves cannot be decided for them. To attempt to bypass the contradiction by ignoring the children's side of the argument will not succeed. To cut them off from their families, to preserve them from the 'infection' of the outside world stands the danger of alienating both the children and their families. There has been a prevalent worry in the early days of the NYS for example that children will not be allowed home for Christmas. There is resentment that they will not be allowed to stay overnight at home throughout their two years at the NYS. In these cases an externally imposed ruling is experienced as restriction. Only when the children work out their way of dealing with the contradiction over sexual relations will rules imposed be seen not as oppressive but part of a solution which can be argued for by the children against any opposition from outside.

19. This point has raised the broader issue of how far the students should be isolated from the rest of the society. Do they need 'protection'? If there are relations with adults what form should they take? It seems to us that the development of close relations between the children and the working population of the Seychelles is central to the concept of the NYS as the seed of the new society. It is both a question of unifying working people behind the project of the NYS, and of educating them in the practices which are being pioneered in the NYS. Below are some examples of how this could be carried forward:

- i) the involvement of adults in the life of the village. This has already happened to some extent: with open days, volunteer workers during the August camp, individuals being invited in to help with particular projects. Can this be extended? One idea

mentioned earlier was the development of the guest house in the village, run by the students, where visitors could come and stay, help in production, join in re-creation, experience for themselves the alternative relations of the village. Voluntary workers would be particularly helpful in developing certain skills, or at times when skilled or unskilled labour was needed in excess of that available in the village.

ii) students using their education, time and skills to contribute to working class life and culture in the Seychelles - returning in the form of their labour the resources that have financed the NYS and which have indirectly been drawn from the labour of the whole society. There are many possibilities, some of which have already begun:

- the rediscovery of the history of the Seychelles as experienced by the oppressed: using oral history, and producing working people's autobiographies as a way of reclaiming history for labour.
- producing their own newspaper for general circulation in the country (already started with the publication of Vilaz la Zenes).
- producing their own radio programmes for the country (the village radio station was officially opened by the President in June 1981).
- conducting sousvéys of the conditions of labour in the Seychelles - as part of the development of a common consciousness of their conditions. We call them sousveys rather than surveys because they should see the world from underneath rather than on top, from the point of view of labour and its collective identity, rather than from the point of view of capital.
- preparing exhibitions for circulation round the island, to include photographs, video, facts, and perceptions

about issues of current concern. Initially these could build from the work of the blocs (crops, animal husbandry, building, health and nutrition, fishing, information, culture) consolidating clearly and succinctly the history, structure, possibilities, new technology, and social relations in each of these areas.

All the above are part of the expansion of the consciousness of labour, as a class for itself. The NYS could then be seen to be using its time and resources working on things which must be considered necessities if the progressive forces in the Seychelles are to develop a confidence and collective awareness in all three spheres of daily life. Instead of the separation of education from adult life characteristic of capitalist society, the village would be contributing to the cultural and ideological transformation which the Revolution has made possible.

iii) twinning between clusters and different districts in the country. This would be one way of organising a number of the projects mentioned above, clusters might arrange to conduct the sousveys in their twin district. They could help organise the recording of the oral histories of the district, set up the exhibitions, contribute to district development projects. They could invite their districts to special occasions in the village, organise voluntary help for the village from their districts, invite people from the district to participate in special radio programmes on the district, and so on. A district could seek help (for example the preparation of materials) from the twin cluster for specific campaigns which it was involved in: health education for instance, or literacy. P9 leavers from the district could be guests of the cluster so that they could see how the NYS worked and thus know what was involved if they volunteered to join.

- iv) contribution to development projects. At first it would be most practical to site these locally in the area around Port Launay, although during NYS holidays teams would be free to travel further to work on projects (the development of the outer islands is one option, but for the purpose of building support among local working people there is a case for concentrating the projects in well populated areas).

20. Nothing is so powerful an argument as practice. That the working people of the Seychelles can see from themselves what the NYS is doing is of the first importance. Like justice, progressive education should not only be done, it should be seen to be done. Open days, newspapers, radio programmes, speeches have all helped to spread what the NYS stands for. But it is important, too, for as many working people in the Seychelles as possible to experience the day-to-day life of the NYS either within the village, or in the local districts to which the clusters would be linked.

21. No project is an island entire unto itself. In the NYS, the students, the teachers, animateurs and co-ordinators all come from a society still deep with division. Most will have to return to that wider society, and find ways to live and work. So the NYS cannot escape these divisions, nor the contradictions to which they give rise. What it can do is to recognise the issues clearly and give space to the young to solve them progressively. This is the task which the government has set to the new generation. If it continues to trust them, then the seeds which are planted in the NYS will flower not just in the village, but in each corner of the wider archipelego.