

## A PLACE FOR ME?

This year there are many young people who will be asking “Is there a place for me?”

Work has provided young and older people with a place: a place to learn skills, a place that gives a structure to our lives, a place where we can make friends, a place where we can contribute something valuable to others, a place where we can earn money.

But how do you find a place when there is no work?

You have to create a place for yourself.

This is not easy. But you can do it.

How? By using the gifts you already have and by seeking help.

Seek help from your family and friends.

Seek help from the other young people in your area.

Seek help from your local community including schools, colleges, faith communities and voluntary groups.

Seek help from your Local Authority in your village, district, county, town or city.

Seek help from your Government.

And what kind of help can they offer you?

From your family and friends you can learn skills that will help you all your life: how to care for children or older people, how to manage money, how to cook, how to grow your own food, how to decorate, how to care for vehicles, or modern technology, how to wash and iron clothes, how to clean and how to repair a house.... some of this you will know, but your family and friends have skills you can learn from.

In the local community there will be other young people who are asking “Is there a place for me?” Make it your business to get to know them so you can help one another. With them you may want to go to existing local groups. With them you may want to set up new groups for sport, music, art, crafts, technology, or you may want to help with a local environmental project. You may want to start a small business together. For all of this seek help in your local community – from schools, colleges, faith groups, and voluntary groups.

From your Local Authority seek out what help is available to enable you and your friends to “build a place for yourselves.”

Talk to local colleges, talk to the Youth Service, talk to your local councillors. Ask for their help with the groups and the projects that you and your friends want to develop together.

From your Government seek what resources are available, in terms of training and financial support. Do this through local offices like those of Jobcentre Plus. Talk to your Member of Parliament about what you and your friends are building together, and seek her or his help.

And what is your part in all of this?

Build a timetable for every day that gives you time to learn new skills, time to do voluntary work, and time to develop projects with your friends. Have at least one day a week off, and some time off every day. Aim for a 40 hour working week. If you learn time-discipline now, it will help you at every stage of your life.

What about money?

Many communities have built an informal economy where skills and time are traded, not money. Try and learn about these schemes and develop them in your own community. If you can learn to manage with the limited funds you have now, this will help you to manage money wisely all your life.

And what about the future?

As our economy slowly revives, you will be ready.

You will have learnt many skills you can transfer to the world of paid work.

You will have made friends that last a lifetime.

You will have built a place for yourself and for others.

***Raymond Draper***

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