

Kelou

M. PHIL NEWSLETTER

No. 1 December 1975.

We have never been good at keeping deadlines. Constant with that tradition this first edition is a few months late! I have not tried to summarize or pull together the points made in the individual contributions you sent in, since they are very different in form and content. They are all here just as I received them between August and December.

The IDS seems to have survived our departure without major injuries. The new M. Phils have taken over with a strong group of 17 men and 4 women. Those of us who are still here can't help feeling under strong pressure to apply our newly acquired knowledge to the "real world", defined as anywhere outside the IDS or the campus of Sussex University.

In case you don't know yet, you are now M. Phil alumni (what an awful name!) a newly created category of IDS-associates. This means that you get free accommodation for short visits to the IDS, that you are on the IDS-mailing list (for annual reports etc.) and that you will be invited to participate in IDS activities.

This first issue of the newsletter is just the beginning of an attempt to keep in touch after the end of the course and we hope that it will really take off with its second edition in a year's time, when we will be able to step back from the course and reconsider it, and when we can report about the experience gained in our jobs or research.

So far I have used "you" to mean the M. Phil students, but the idea of this newsletter is to keep the communication going between the students themselves and between students and IDS ^{members.} ~~students.~~ I am sure, Ron, in restating your perception of what the M. Phil course should provide, you have opened the debate for the next issue of the newsletter. Thanks.

Well, I have done my bit for this year and hand over the editing of the next issue to whoever is going to be around next summer or autumn.

Hubert
1st December 1975

NEWSLETTER

From: Blas Tomic

It is nice to be able to send in a report from abroad, in so far as it seems to be the only way to say something out of the usual thing (which does not necessarily mean that the usual thing is a bore)

I am in Alfredo's land, Peru, doing some research at the seat of the Andean Pact (a sub-regional integration agreement which includes Chile). In fact, as I arrived here only a week ago and straight into a conference which has hitherto taken up all my time, I have yet to get into my own specific work. But ! but we have had the chance to carry out some marginal tasks, of the kind Alan Leather and Marjorie you know what I mean.

I intend to visit Alfredo's family and see if I can find out from whom did he inherit his high degree of kinetic energy. I shall report on that too.

On the side of the 'David-Story-type' of preoccupations, I have been trying to acquire a feeling of what the Peruvian process means to the Peruvian people themselves. You get a mixed impression: there is no doubt that the presence of the process is felt everywhere. The media in general is centred on the subject, normally in a constructive manner. There seems to exist more than a minimum of consensus around the fundamental aims of the process. Nevertheless, one still finds all around the kind of things that one would expect a revolution to eradicate in the first place (and this is an eight-year-old revolution): beggars in every block; very poor shanty towns; black Cadillacs with fatty ladies in the back; etc.

But it is a live process: the people, both those for and those against the process, have not become dormant about it. The opinions I hear in the streets (and I hold these street-side conversations every day), are never indifferent and by no means unanimous.

A last thing that struck me is the atmosphere of real tension that exists in relation to a possible war with Chile. It is, for example, the permanent topic of conversation at a restaurant table and, although the government has explicitly forbidden open references to the issue in the media (it kicked out of the country, only two weeks ago, 23 Peruvian journalists who failed to comply), the question of a 'peace treaty' (?) with Chile has been a major headline for some days now.

Finally, two additional things on my research:

- The Andean Pact is undergoing a serious crisis, which is largely due to political differences between the various governments that make it up. I hope this will not make the investigation more difficult but, on the contrary, more interesting.

- I shall be visiting some other Latin American countries during the next months, in all of which there exists a rather tense and unstable situation. I hope to report briefly on this aspect of my field experience.

Lots of good wishes to you all,

Blas Tomic 17th August 1975

..... and a second letter from Blas :

Just in case I am still in time for catching the "Stop Press" I have decided to file this 'live' report on the Peruvian situation, as seen by one of us.

First things first: I visited Alfredo's family and discovered what I was sure I would: nice, hospitable and happy people. There is no doubt, however, that Alfredo has developed some original features which cannot be traced genetically: he seems to be the very best of cooking rice. Alfredo's family is really very proud of him and they are desperate to know about his 'sentimental whereabouts'. I was very prudent and said nothing (they want him to marry 'Elsita').

The coup: I am afraid that Latin America^{is} by now deserving the recognition of the world, particularly that of the International Decorators with regard to our extraordinary variety of ways and means and motives and everything when it comes to a coup. This one, as seen by a careless observer, could be branded as the 'dullest' of them all. Not only was there no upheaval whatsoever, but neither the outgoing nor the incoming general seemed to feel that something important was changing. When I was first told "there has been a coup!", all kinds of dark thoughts come to my mind: from the end of the Peruvian process to a repetition of the xenophobic episodes lived in Chile two years ago. Five minutes later I realized that no-one could care less about what was going on: "it is a palace intrigue", was the explanation. Films went on showing; horse-races stayed on; offices didn't close; traffic was normal: not even people sounding horns in rigid approval or disapproval; and so on. Well: the dullest coup.

But ! I have had two days to 'consult with the experts' and the 'scene behind the scene' is a very different one. To make it short:

the removal
of Velasco and his closest aides and his substitution by Morales - Bermudez and his own group of men, can easily be deciphered by anyone who has followed the Peruvian process close enough to get to know the people in charge: it is a ² -stroke that is clearly and directly aimed at stopping what was becoming an accelerated drift to the right. Velasco's ailing health had enabled an important penetration by the more moderate sectors of the army, of the highest positions of power. Now, the promise is to "deepen and accelerate the revolutionary changes, keeping always inside the frame originally defined by the armed forces in 1968".

The above pretends to be an objective report. Let me add a comment of my own: as long as the process here remains the exclusive responsibility of the military, and no channels of popular participation are built, Peru will remain subject to the forces that produce political instability and the revolutionary process will find it very hard to achieve irreversibility.

Blas Lima; August 31st 1975.

[Blas went from Peru to Chile, he seems to be o.k.]

From: Marjorie Fernandes

Let me begin by thanking Ron and everyone else at the IDS for having given me the opportunity to be a participant and for their contribution to the success of our course. I feel privileged to have been the only woman on the course and it was quite an experience for me. Thanks also to all of you, my class-mates, who accepted me as an equal comrade, and for the nice time we had together both in and out of the classroom.

When I first came to Sussex, things seemed so different from what I had been used to in India. I had never come across an 'inter-disciplinary course' there; being bred in the tradition of 'pure economics', I have never done sociology or political science and, hence, was quite apprehensive about them. However, over the months, I found that it wasn't too difficult to understand reasonably well and appreciate the non-strictly economics literature or terminology we had to deal with on our course. In fact, I've come to realize how limited in value a purely economic approach is in the development field - something, I hope, we will appreciate soon in India too.

Being in the teaching line for some time before coming here, it was interesting for me to see the differences in the educational system here compared with India. With fewer students per class, more resources etc., I know the system here is not quite appropriate there - a case of inappropriate technology; as Charles Cooper would say - but, I hope, that won't prevent me from trying to change

somewhat the nature of my input, when I get back to teaching again: e.g. encouraging more cooperation amongst students in discussions (the joint stats term-papers and the case-studies we did are quite an example to me though, with respect to the latter, considering the absence of xeroxing and limited typing facilities in India, I'll have to think of alternative methods of organization), relying less on exam and more on subject-interest for motivating students, encouraging participation in other activities, besides strictly academic studies as both, I feel, contribute to a student's total personality, etc.

As I've come to realize that my work should go beyond the normally expected one of preparing students for a set syllabus to meet exam requirements, I hope also to do some research simultaneously with teaching. And one main reason for my wanting to go on for the D. Phil here - this will be my short-run programme - is to learn better how to undertake research, for which the M. Phil, although it has broadened my knowledge a great deal, hasn't equipped me sufficiently, I feel. Of course, I am aware that this wasn't the purpose of M. Phil perhaps.

To say something about our course content teaching method etc., I think it would be repetition after all the discussions we had during the preparation for the M. Phil Second Round. About the usefulness of what we did in our Course to the work I'll be tackling later on or for my studies in the near future, it is a bit too early to comment upon now itself, I am afraid. Our next year's Newsletter will have more of that, I suppose. Also, by then, it would be interesting to know something about the present M. Phil.

Finally, I think it would be nice if we kept in touch, if possible, more informally and frequently, besides our annual Newsletter.

Looking forward to receiving the Newsletter and hearing from the others, I conclude with best wishes to one and all.

Marjorie September 1975

From: Hiro Kaku

Happy are those who have finished their works, and reading this Newsletter either drowsing with the scent of budding flowers in this season of autumn while birds may be twittering in the sky, or wandering in the English countryside gazing at the vines of the cottage-trees with some reminiscence. In this season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, it is no wonder that one has a moment to reflect the past two years.

Andre Gide has once said something about influences, how the more influenced one is, the more original one becomes, and so on. I wonder how his words could be true in view of the experience of the past two years of M. Phil. Of course, the difficulty lies in the fact that one cannot easily tell how far one has been influenced, and at the same time it would be more difficult to say how far what one has conceived is really original. The experience of any kind seems to hold this ambivalent aspect of influence and originality.

I remember the old Japanese proverb which says 'if you need a good medicine, you must make your own!' Probably the question of either being influenced or creating something new is a futile one. What we needed was not a general prescription, but a more specific one if something original is to exist at all. Egoistic enough it may be, but there may be coherence as well.

Knowing that making a pause like this is too early, for it would take some years to be really qualified to talk about anything of the experience we shared, but at least it can be said that we have found a clue to what kind of questions should be asked. This, I think, is something invaluable.

Until we see who has influenced most, and if I employ Gide's words straightforwardly, who were influenced most, all good wishes to everyone!

HIRO KAKU
September 1975

From: Susil Fernando

Behind the "Development Studies"

Thanks to all those with whom I associated and listened to during the course, I learned to think quite a lot but not to believe. If this was one of the purposes of the course, to that extent the course was successful.

Our M. Phil course purported to be in "Developing Studies", didn't it? But even after its completion I am still finding it difficult to decide whether it was about development and if so whose development?

What do I mean by development? Development is nothing but the improvement of productive forces, i.e. the labour and material means of production: machines, tools, production systems etc., which can be called technology. It is the only way for a society to achieve an overall high productivity per worker (and his family) which can improve the standard of living provided such productivity is not exploited by outside interests. Development should necessarily mean a high

productivity and the ability to keep the value produced by the society either for its own consumption or for further accumulation on the improvement of productive forces within the society.

More work (gross labour intensity) or more production for someone else's high consumption or accumulation does not imply a development in an underdeveloped society. It may be a new brand of slavery in which slaves are allowed to live in their own countries while working for masters in advanced centres (in relation to export-oriented development strategies).

The dependency upon redistribution, when approaching the problems of underdevelopment seems to me misleading. This does not mean that I am saying - even for a moment - that redistribution is not necessary. I think, and I can see, that third world bourgeois intellectuals are highly excited about the approach of the strategy of development which is based on redistribution, labour-intensive technology, planning (dominated by the World Bank and its colleague institutions) etc. etc. Certainly such "red labelled 'green revolutions' " in the field of development studies provide the only alternative to the survival of the ruling class in the third world.

This class is the peripheral counterpart of the centre capitalists who provide the centre with supplementary economies in order to be supplied with the inputs necessary for the profitable function of the capitalist system. The threat from the problem of unemployment to the political, social and economic power of the ruling class can only be kept under control by employing the people somewhere. (Whether just this side of hell is immaterial :)

The first step towards the elimination of poverty seems to me necessarily the seizure of power by the poor from the repressive ruling class nationally (nations internationally). What is necessary is to find the best way to organize the people nationally (nations internationally). What developed-country intellectuals could do to this end, if really interested in eliminating poverty in the third world, would be to transfer information to the third world in order to strengthen their bargaining power against repressive ruling classes nationally and repressive ruling nations internationally. This includes the information relating to the strategies of playing out one poor nation against the other to keep the poor divided in order to exploit them easily. But unfortunately research in development studies seems most likely to lead to the transfer of information from the third world to developed countries, thus aggravating the vulnerability of the poor. The importance of information for the accelerated capitalist development has to be kept in mind in this respect.

The distribution of investment - the way I can describe the new approach - would never solve the problems of underdevelopment. I see no realistic reason as to why the third world countries should have to start

their development strategies with the out of date technology in developed countries and to proceed step by step, discovering their own technologies on the way. Even though there are certain man-made barriers to acquiring technology, it is impossible and unwise to try to develop complete indigenous technology since no surplus would be transferred to the third world countries for research and development as has been the case for the advanced countries.

Third world planners, intellectuals and politicians seemingly still waiting for someone else to come and develop their countries with a handful of aid, need to understand that this is not something that is going to happen without heavy cost. The poor have to depend on the poor but not on the rich. That is the nature of the system in which we are poor. If a country has a dedicated community striving for its development, no other force in the world can prevent its development. If it has no such community no other force can develop it. It is entirely up to the "people" - the development.

One thing I experienced while being in an economically developed country is the consciousness of the people of the national problems of the country. I would cite one of the IDS fellows, quoting from the British Prime Minister, in one of the seminars, "Arabs must know who we are, our Universities, laboratories will show it to them". I understand partly how Universities (economists) are going to show it. Why do the intellectuals of the Third World not question themselves: what kind of people are we? - How easily can we be cheated by the Western capitalist ideology? It is utterly silly that so-called respectable intellectuals of the Third World are begging around the world for a solution to their problems. As far as I can see, they know nothing or very little about their own problems. Most of them are quite outsiders to the "people" in their countries.

I was trying to understand an unfortunate positive correlation between non-progressive ways of thinking and belonging to economically poor societies. It leads me to believe that the social class origin of the intellectual has much to do with their ways of thinking. The rich in poor societies are the most reactionary thinkers. The faithful students of capitalism may be the cause of the unfortunate future of the labour and natural resources of the poor in the third world. But they are respectable intellectuals among themselves as well as to the centre capitalists who spread the capitalist ideology over the world for their own interest.

Susil Fernando

From: Doug Hindson

According to Sheila "Doug is working his ass off" as a teacher of development economics at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. What follows are excerpts of various letters he sent to friends in Sussex:-

About our course:-

"I think the two years I spent in England will prove to be amongst the most important in my intellectual and political development. The work and discussions which went on outside the bounds of the formal courses were as, and, in some respects, important than those within. The prerequisites for this were the people I met while at the IDS, the facilities it provided and the time we had as students (especially in the second year) to follow up our own interests".

About his teaching:-

"At present I am giving courses to third year undergraduates (a course in development economics) and to first year (a few lectures in international trade). In addition there are tutorials and part responsibility for an M.A. student who is doing research in Health Services in South Africa".

"I am struggling against the tide of day to day work demands, which leave little time for thought other than to do with teaching. There is the ever present danger of becoming completely immersed in these narrow concerns and forgetting all but what is most urgent and obvious, and things occurring about one. I hope that, as planned, I can get down to my research and some other matters during the vacation and in the coming terms when familiarity with the teaching subject matter will give me more time for other things.

Doug Hindson
Jul/Sep. 1975.

Topic: David Story

In the aftermath, the quiet contemplation

For the 16th time today I am asked, when I am gazing. A few minutes before, our recent and worthy Director had posed the question with more menacing tone, no doubt a little anxious to rid himself of the last straggling evidence of his completed task. Story pauses to consider and realises that a more sensitive soul might feel dismissed, dispatched and unwanted.

The last fortnight had been a vague, hazy affair of wrangles with extortionate shipping lines, of protracted discussions with uncertain information services in British Rail, of close examination of the distance to Galway Bay, the journey to the inner Hebrides, and the miles to Lorraine, and of the savouring of a quiet beer at 10 in the morning.

With haughty, and unwarranted superiority I watch the concerns of the M. Phil II. what is development; is "modernization" just insidious indoctrination, do we need all this theory? I pause again to reflect on the hectic journey of the last two years: the discovery of historical analysis, of people in interest groups, of States that are far from omnipotent and benign, of China's rigid discipline which feeds a quarter of mankind, and of development agencies not really going anyplace, but enjoying themselves in the process. It is "no accident" that quite by chance I pause again, and quickly sharpen, with "Dorian" fervour, the questions of my inquisitors; from when am I going, to the "essential" question, of why, and where am I going?

I pause again, is it all just a game. Does it all really matter? "But if nothing matters ... why should it matter that I learn to see? Our lot as men is to learn, for good or bad. You should know by now that a man of knowledge lives by acting, not by thinking about acting, nor by thinking about what he will think when he has finished acting..... He knows that his life will be over altogether too soon; he knows that he, as well as everybody else, is not going anywhere; he knows because he sees that nothing is more important than anything else".

You have given me eyes to see - I have no illusions that my vision is clear - but having seen from your high pinnacle, I ask

again does anything really matter; can India's poverty disappear, or is it all a game? But, even if little matters, even if we're not going anywhere, I shall still act, that pleasure at least, is still mine.

What is good for me is greed in you!

As one enters the office of R.P. Dore one is immediately struck by the collection of theory on the shelves. If one goes to the room across the corridor then it is apparent that there is such a comprehensive range that it wasn't even possible to get a desk in. The collection isn't restricted to just one topic, all the social science disciplines are there and the various schools of thought are represented - even Marx and Engles win a place.

When one then appreciates the sharp perception of our Director then one realises that he will be able to use his wide theoretic- al background to ask the type of questions -that are really use- ful, knowing that these questions are not just random questions, but ones which rest on a broad theoretical base. His students though, are expected to discover from empirical deductions how Marshall went off the rails and how the Modernization Theorists are able to modify their emphasis with every whim of U.S. foreign policy. Theory would not provide his students with the back- ground to ask useful questions, the labour theory of value would not show up the error in neo-classical thought; theory - for them, would just be an esoteric exercise for personal status. The ambiguity all seems a bit puzzling.

Dave
September 1975

From: Jorge Vivas

I just want to formulate some questions and try to give them a short answer. To start off, I'll make a general question and then I'll formulate some sub-questions. Here goes!

What do I think about our M. Phil course? Each one of us will have an opinion of his own. One might say that opinions will be based on factors such as cultural environment, academic background and expectations. To this last factor I would add a thought which I think is most important. This refers to the degree of awareness of what one thinks one should learn and how one should be taught.

Thus, my point of departure to tell you what I think about our M. Phil course is this 'awareness'. The other three of them could be kept 'constant' as I think that independently of one's academic background, expectations and cultural environment, if one wants to undertake postgraduate studies one should have a certain degree of awareness as I said above, of what it is that one wants to do. In this way, the next thing to do is to see to what extent fulfilment matched expectations. This is, however, not that easy, because even though I was quite aware of what I wanted to do, once the course is over many other things have been added to the whole picture and one's former ideas might get a little distorted. Thus, there is something else beside awareness which has to be taken into account.

At this point, then, I would make a distinction. On the one hand I should consider the academic aspects of the course and on the other, the non-academic ones. Under these circumstances I would refer awareness to the academic aspects of the course alone. Nevertheless, and before going any further, I should say that the latter are as important as the former.

On this basis, a first subquestion arises: Did the course fulfil all my academic expectations? the answer is no, it did not.

However, to be fair, I must say that it did bring in many things which I had not thought of which, on balance, outweigh those of my expectations which were not met by it. From this, however, does not follow that I think that our course reached the maximum of its possibilities. In fact, there is still a lot to be done and much, I'm afraid, depends on the demands of the students and the intensity of the feedback process which takes place between the academic staff and the students. In this respect I am happy that we did our best to try and introduce some changes within the course, which I think gave it a different shape and turned it into more of a challenge than it had been before. At least some of us felt much more committed to it.

Did the course provide one with a kit of tools to go around solving the problems of the developing countries? No, it did not. I wish there were such a course somewhere in the world. However, it did provide us, I think, with a much broader understanding of what the problems of the developing countries are about. At least, for us they are not just 'structural' problems any more. As far as development problems are concerned, the word 'structural' has the characteristic trait of meaning a lot and nothing all together at a time. What this means is that I feel that now we are able at least to qualify a problem and not simply say that it is a 'structural' problem and that is all there is about it.

Was it worthwhile to come all the way from South America to do the M. Phil course? My answer is a definite yes, it was.

This is something which I think is important to discuss as it is most frequent to have people asking you "Why didn't you do post-graduate studies in your own country?"

Under the assumption that I could have undertaken postgraduate studies of similar academic level my main complaint about those courses would be the following. First of all those courses tend to concentrate either on a single academic discipline or a single country and continent. In this way one's image of society is a great deal distorted. Comparisons between different patterns of development generally concentrated on those countries belonging

to the same continent in the same system of political economy. The participants in those courses are mostly nationals of the same country or continent where the course takes place. In this way the possibilities of interaction with people with different cultural backgrounds, interests and the like do not take place at all. Again, this contributes to give the students a sort of unidimensional view of what world development is about.

The above mentioned complaints are just a few out of many that could be listed. I have not even mentioned advantages such as the fact of learning a language which by itself enhances one's learning possibilities. A great deal of the literature on development and other subjects is first, and sometimes only, published in English.

Of course, and in this Ron Dore is quite right, it is still too soon to appraise the actual outcome. My intention, nevertheless, is just to put forward some broad ideas of what I think about a course we have just finished.

November '75

From: Hubert Schmitz

I think we tend to forget what an extremely difficult educational undertaking the M. Phil course is. The subject matter is the most complex which social science could possibly tackle. The course covers the globe, (the North and South pole are about the only areas which one can justifiably exclude), three (or more?) centuries of world history, and attempts to be interdisciplinary in its approach. Our group came from 13 different countries and each of us had very different academic backgrounds, practical experience, ideologies and above all, motivations for coming to Sussex. Taking into account the fact that our course was a kind of pilot project, launched at a stage when the IDS was very rapidly expanding, I can't help but be amazed how well it went after all.

I certainly got a lot out of it. The first term really opened up some of the complexities of the field. The second term drove me into that kind of frustration which makes you desperate to get out of your intellectual mess. In this way the first two terms laid the foundation for building up a more systematic theoretical grasp of the issues of development studies over the courses of the ^{third and} fourth and fifth term, when things started to fall into place.

At the moment I am working on my thesis and digging into Brazilian statistics. This is really enjoyable after that long painful process of bringing the research outline to a stage which allows one to kick off with the research itself and especially with the data collection. Apart from that, I am doing some part time teaching in Brighton. Subject: Development Studies. When devising a course outline or preparing a seminar I realize that the M. Phil course has given me quite a good basis from which to operate certainly if I think of what I started off with two years ago, ~~and~~ ^{or} compare it with what is done in development studies in German universities.

October 1975

leaving the International Decorating Service I have not really had a chance to reflect upon the M.Phil course except for one weekend here with comrades from Colombia and Down Under. However, that was some weeks ago and since then I have had to work hard. The tempo of work all term has been reminiscent of an M.Phil case study or the last week of vacation when a term paper is being sweated out, I suppose the main difference being a student and a teacher is that now I'm constantly on the hot seat, expected to produce the goods. At the beginning of term this was a frightening prospect but now I'm through to the other end, wrung dry and trying to remember what happened!

Ruskin College is not part of Oxford University although links have existed since its foundation in 1899. The college was the idea of two Americans who were at the University. They recognised, as did others, the need for a residential college to provide a liberal education for working men. It had two basic aims - firstly that after Ruskin a student should return to his work place and bringing new ideas and perceptions, secondly to help fulfill the demand for leaders in the growing labour movement. In a sense these aims have come to contradict each other over the years, as fewer people return to their original work but move on to University and different jobs. This doesn't necessarily mean they leave the labour movement and a number go into trade union admin and research.

Ruskin started with 20 students on a one-year course and now there is a total of 180 students attending for two years. The college offers six different courses, five of them internal while one is examined by outside bodies. The internal diplomas are History, Development Studies, Labour Studies, Literature, and Applied Social Studies, the other one being the Oxford University Diploma in Social Studies. The last three tend to take the majority of the students.

I am mainly concerned with the Development Studies course which has five students in one year. The course was started in 1963 in response to demands from overseas students for a course which was more appropriate to their requirements. Over the two years the course provides an introduction to politics, economics and sociology, plus one term for an optional subject.

The students come from a mixture of backgrounds, both nationally and socially. All the second-year students are from Africa, whereas the first year has two Africans, two West Indians and one English. As with the rest of the students in the collegemany of them come from Trade Union movement, two were General Secretaries of their Unions. The average age of those on the course is about 30.

In addition to the Ruskin course I am taking three young Americans from Manchester College for a one year course in Development Studies.

It has been very exciting planning and teaching these courses because of the wide range of backgrounds and ability of the students. One of the greatest problems for me is to try not to make too many references to the Indian sub-continent in my material.

I have become very interested in the teaching methods for the college as whole because my short experience has made me reconsider the approach to teaching mature students who have largely worked in industry after leaving school at fifteen years. Together with another ex-student who has recently joined the staff I shall be trying to work out a new approach to teaching in the first term.

Unfortunately I am only at Ruskin for a year because I am standing in for someone who is on a sabbatical. Its going to take me that year to get the courses I teach prepared and work out the most appropriate teaching methods. Perhaps it will come in useful somewhere else in the future.

The plans that I have for the future are centred around the role of the International Trade Union Movement in the relationship between the rich and poor world. I am just beginning to formulate some ideas on how I might approach this area which I hope to say more about in our next newsletter.

This all sounds very lighthearted and frivolous therefore in the next newsletter I shall spend more time giving you a summary of work in progress. Empirical study I have undertaken on the grazing habits of Friesian cows. The study is being carried out from my bedroom window which is a perfect observation platform for an objective survey.

Out of eighty one cows I have taken a random sample of one, whose my favourite because she has such lovely eyes. Sue is rather upset by the affair, so is the cat. The major problematic in the study so far has been the individual numbering of the cows on their left buttock. I have made quite a breakthrough in this field by using luminous paint so that they be observed at night. I had to abandon the participant observation part of the study especially at night because I found I spent too much time in the I mean I was out of my depth. That reminds me of the degree ceremony that I attended on your behalf in solitary splendour!

Alan Leather
Oxford December 1971

From: Ron Dore

One ought, I suppose, on this second anniversary of your arrival in Sussex, to be in a position to take stock. I don't really know that I can do that very well. Much better, I think to ask you to take stock. Perhaps in 6 or 9 months time I will write to ask what, in hindsight, you feel you got out of the course.

I have just been writing an article on "Human Capital Theory", mulling over the various competing interpretations of the fact that by and large, in all societies people with higher levels of qualifications have higher incomes. Most of us would like to believe that this is because the process of education which earned them the qualification has made them more able, improved them, enhanced their capacities in some way. There are, however a lot of reasons for doubting so comforting a doctrine, even if one swallows the big assumption that higher earnings are indications of genuinely superior capacities. Perhaps the "naturally" more able people who eventually earn more, because of their ability, get their qualification because they were anyway more able or hardworking rather than the other way round. Or perhaps it's just that a lot of institutional mechanisms, ^{wh. ch} can be explained by the political and market power of self-interested groups simply ensure that those who have got qualifications get more money automatically - without being anymore capable than those without them.

One would like to think that these more cynical interpretations are not all there is to it, and that education in general has, and that these two M. Phil years in particular have had for you, some kind of useful, person-changing, and not merely labelling, effect - even if you find that it does not noticeably enhance your earning power!

If I am going to expect you to say what you have got out of the course, I ought at least to be able to say what I learnt from it. But that is difficult. Perhaps the chief thing is that in an academic institution there is a limit to the extent to which one can buck academic conventions and values.

I don't know / ^{that} I ever told you much about the pre-history of the M. Phil course. Running something of this sort had been discussed off and on for many years. After we had, at IDS, more-or-less made up our minds to go ahead, there were about 2 years of intermittent discussions, with members of the University, particularly the Economics department, first over the question whether an inter-disciplinary development course was acceptable in principle, and secondly over what it should contain.

I remember some of those seemingly endless discussions on the first point. The major worry was: would an inter-disciplinary course be sufficiently "rigorous"? would it be "academically respectable", of sufficient "quality" to count as genuinely "graduate-level" work. I learned a lot from those discussions, about both myself and my colleagues. One of the chief things I learnt is that there are two alternative, but usually interlocking, definitions of "quality", "graduate-level", etc. The first assumes that the discipline is a cumulative one; that is to say that you cannot understand C until you have mastered B, and B is in comprehensible until you have learnt A and so on. "Graduate-level" then means something which you cannot understand without two or three preliminary years of study.

Unfortunately, even economics, which comes closest to being a cumulative discipline in that sense, is much less so than the natural sciences, and among the writings of sociologists and political scientists, there is not much which an intelligent adult could not come to understand after a few months preliminary study. Progress in these disciplines is more a broadening than a deepening.

So something else becomes necessary as a criterion of "quality" and "rigour". All too often it is just "difficulty". If you can write an arcane piece of econometrics in the AER or EJ which only 2% of your fellow countrymen can understand, then you have written something of greater "rigour" than if what you write is intelligible to something like half of the population. If you run a Masters level course, such, that in any population with a normal distribution of intelligence and perseverance, only the top 10% of the population (as measured by this mixed I plus P criterion) could ever pass it, then you have a properly "graduate" level course. If all the material in it could be easily mastered by 50% of the population then your conception of quality is low.

This is natural enough, Masters degrees are frequently taken seriously in the outside world as labels - sometimes as indicators of ^{the} mastery of specific chunks of knowledge, more often as proxy measures of "general ability". A university has a strong self-interested stake in the reputation of the degrees it offers; unless its credentials have a good reputation, nobody will come to it. It must avoid at all cost ever letting it be said: "that man is a fool! And a M. Phil from Sussex! Sussex must be one of those places which would give a degree to an intelligent chimpanzee provided he worked hard enough". At the same time, being soft-hearted, university teachers hate to have to maintain standards by failing people. Hence every effort to make sure that only the top 10% of high-flyers ever get into the graduate school in the first place.

I'm not antipathetic to the stress of quality, intellectual excellence etc. I do admire the elegance of ingenious arguments, and can get a tremendous kick out of mastering a chain of reasoning that is genuinely abstruse and difficult. But

IDS is a place where we hear a lot about inappropriate technology, including inappropriate intellectual technology. A

number of us had been in planning offices in the Third World where econometric whizz-kids from the MIT and Chiago were doing lovely computer models of their economy, displaying the "quality" of the "rigourous" training they had received in impressively "difficult" branches of learning by manipulating inadequate data in elegant but not particularly useful ways.

Well, we wanted to avoid that sort of outcome. That meant stressing criteria of usefulness and relevance to policy problems rather than the conventional academic criteria of "quality". All very well in theory; hard in practice - hard at any rate, for academics in an academic institution.

For example, the core of academic sociology in most academic institutions is a course in sociological theory. This usually consists partly of the history of sociology - summaries of what founding father ^(with a couple of S) said what, partly of theoretical discussion of whether ~~Society~~ is a self-equalibrating system, held together by consensual values, or alternatively a collection of individual s and groups with potentially conflicting interests; between whom conflict is contained by the coercive constraints of those who have preponderant power. These discussions are hard to relate to the analysis of any concrete social problems, but they are difficult discussions (if rarely rigorous) because of the abstract level at which they are conducted; hence, because of the difficulty, considered more academically respectable than the sort of hypothesising and hypothesis-testing which starts from the comparison of social situations and leads to what is usually called "lower level empirical generalisation". It seemed to me that you should be spared all this. And what was useful in it could be best conveyed by looking at the different ways in which concepts like "class" or "power" are used by various sociologists to analyse concrete situations - an exercise which shuld reveal that most empirical sociologists - not being engaged in debate about polarised abstractions, assumed that elements of both value consensus and coercion were present in most institutions.

Perhaps we didn't do it very well. At any rate the chief result was that you felt that you had been cheated and you would not be satisfied until you got your ration of academically respectable theory like everybody else. Some of you even chose to grapple with the complexities of the labour theory of value and the mechanisms of capitalist reproduction. Well, perhaps you were right. Perhaps there is something in the academic criteria of value, perhaps a graduate course ought to contain a "stretching" element, something to get ones teeth into, some opportunity to prove ones theoretical manhood irrespective of all questions of usefulness. Perhaps, more substantively, it is only by working through abstract levels of theorising that one can grasp important implications of the conceptual tools one must use for the useful practical analysis. Reflect on these things, anyway, and tell me, when, in the future, you get to tackling problems of research or policy decisions, what seems to you to have been most valuable about the course and what that suggests about the interrelations between what is theoretical, what is rigorous, what is difficult and what is useful.

RPD/HR
8.9.75

The second round

The new M.Phil course started in September. With some 300 candidates, we had plenty of choice. We also tried to improve the selection by interviewing as many of the serious candidates as possible. I would not dream of saying whether the 21 who eventually constituted the second group were "better" than the 18 of the first round. (What is "better" anyway?) But certainly the coverage is broader, including 1 from Eastern Europe (Poland) and 3 from the United States. Also the balance is improved in some dimensions, at least in gender (4 women), and perhaps also in occupation (including a United Nations official, a diplomat and a businessman.)

The evaluation of the course by the first round students stressed the danger of too perfunctory an introduction to basic theory: on the other hand, few of its students or staff favoured a wholly theoretical first term. We tried to meet this dilemma by devoting a solid week each to Marxism (Robin Murray), Structuralism (Osvaldo Sunkel) and Neo-classical Liberalism (Michael Lipton). I am still not sure that this is the right solution: the treatment was inevitably somewhat superficial.

These 3 weeks were preceded by a conceptual introduction (Geoff Lamb) and a version of the 'world context' unit (myself), and followed by practical applications of analysis to MNCs (Reg Green), Marginalisation (Fred Bienefeld and Martin Godfrey) and Health (Emanuel de Kadt). Students have thus been introduced both to the main theoretical approaches and to a wide range of empirical material on current issues. The term paper is on the applicability of these approaches to one of these issues.

As before, sessions are being arranged with well-known people in the field (eg Paul Streeten, Arghiri Emanuel, Gerry Helleiner) but this time these sessions are entirely informal, with very little introduction by the guests - who are not allowed to bring notes!

The second term will be wholly historical (after a brief introduction to computer use by Biplab). It starts with theories of imperialism and trade (in which Robin Murray and David Evans will go over some of the ground they covered in the first round). Then 3 units in parallel starting with the 18th century, and tracing developments in the "centre" (Barry Supple) and the Latin American part of the "periphery" (Osvaldo Sunkel and Edmundo Fuenzalida) as well as some 19th century national patterns of development (Richard Jolly). Units on the world context since the war (Osvaldo Sunkel and myself), on the twentieth century patterns of development (Richard Jolly), including Japan and the Soviet Union, will run over into the third term, when the development patterns of Cuba, China, etc. will be discussed. In that term there will also be a SPRU unit on resources, and various options. The Easter vacation will be taken up with a visit to the Italian South as a case study in development policies.

The course seems more "integrated" (in an attempt to meet a major criticism of the first round). It is certainly more historical, and more international. There have been sacrifices - "data use" has been postponed until the second year. We shall then deal with various aspects of the techniques of research and planning. (The basic principle is that one should not embark on these technical questions before acquiring the necessary historical and theoretical background).

One can detect again some division between students who are mainly problem solvers (and want to improve their governments' performance), and those who are basically problem posers (looking for 'more fundamental' theoretical issues) the latter mainly graduates of the universities of the industrial countries and Latin America (though the familiar correlation between affluence and theoretical radicalism is by no means perfect).

My impression is that the second round works even more as a team than the first. They certainly spend (much!) longer in collective discussions of their views on whether units should run in parallel, how groups should be formed, etc. A hostile critic might consider this collective navel-gazing, and it

does cut into the time available for studying. But it may contribute to social cohesion, as well as focussing the attention of both students and teachers on the purposes of work and on the rationale of its organisation. We shall see in due course whether the students become habituated to organisational discussion or whether this loses its fascination for them.

The present group benefits a good deal from the fact that the course has been run once already. By May, we shall have to face the question whether there should be a third round, and if so when. Any further reflections you have on the value of the course in the light of your own experience since finishing it would be appreciated.

DS/BMT
6 Jan.76