

Editorial

This issue of the Bulletin is largely devoted to the Report of the Commission on International Development* (the Pearson Commission), constituted in August 1968 at the invitation of the President of the World Bank, Mr. Robert McNamara, to assess the results of twenty years of development assistance and propose new policies for the future.

As the review of press comment, contributed to this issue by Fiona Wilson, shows, the Report has evoked widespread favourable reactions.

It is difficult not to be pleased with a document, coming from a Commission with the weight of the present tone, which calls for an increase in aid efforts, at a time when almost everywhere mainly internal considerations of a political and financial nature are jeopardizing aid programmes. It is difficult not to praise the emphasis given to the need for new departures in international trade, the castigating of affluent protectionism, or the necessity of channelling a much greater proportion of funds through multilateral channels. We must also be grateful for Pearson's forthrightness on the population problem, for his frequent reference to inequalities in income distribution in developing countries, for his stress on resources for education and health, and for his awareness of such problems as the existence of a serious brain drain from the less developed to the rich countries.

Of course, an increase in the measure of aid would be very welcome. At the same time, it would leave many problems unsolved; some of which are discussed in the articles by Percy Selwyn and Michael Lipton. But shouldn't the Commission first have asked whether this increase could be achieved at all, and how those forces were to be overcome which make it hard even to maintain the present aid levels? In his article, Frank Judd

*Lester B. Pearson, Chairman, Partners in Development, Praeger, 1969 and Pall Mall Press, London.

examines the chances of the Pearson recommendations being taken seriously in Britain. One cannot fail to notice a naive optimism in the Report not only in regard to the actual effect of (increased) development aid - echoes of Rostow's discredited stage theory and take-off predictions, there - but also regarding the (political) processes which should ensure the implementation of the Commission's recommendations in the developed world. No-one seems to have asked who is going to push for more aid, or what the comparative strength is of the social and political forces in the rich countries ranged for and against a major change in aid policies.

The composition of the Commission told very clearly in this respect. I do not wish in the slightest to belittle the personal eminence of the Commissioners, but they were all either politicians, (or persons professionally used to exhortation and to seeing the world in ideological terms) or economists, (persons whose professional background predisposes them to approaching reality through the haze of abstract models or by reference to impersonal "market" forces). The absence from the Commission of a prominent sociologist or political scientist only serves to emphasize that, despite the frequent reference in the Report to social - and human - concomitants, development is still seen at the world's highest level as a problem to be dealt with predominantly, if not exclusively, within the framework of economic analysis and policy-making. This becomes particularly disturbing when that framework appears to be copied straight from models en vogue during the nineteenth century, such as in the view expressed on the role of private foreign investment. Despite some valuable insights on their part, one could write pages of objections to that aspect of the Commission's analysis (and I breathed a sigh of relief when I found at least a partial dissociation from this rubbish on the part of Sir Edward Boyle and Sir Arthur Lewis). Much of its essence is reflected in the suggestion that private capital may be more of an effective aid instrument than public money "because those who risk their own money may be expected to be particularly

interested in its efficient use" (122). Doesn't that beg the whole question of development: efficient for whom?

The Pearson Commission has written a valuable "sermon" on development. As most sermons, however, its views on good and evil, and of their causes, are coloured by the identity of the (collective) preacher and of the church he represents. In nineteenth century Britain discussions on the "morality" of the effects of the Industrial Revolution were soon overtaken by increasing pressure on the part of the working class to redress the immoral imbalance. Endless harangues from pulpits (incorporating good and bad sociology) would not, by themselves, have led to a lessening of the gap between the rich and the poor: a problem, incidentally, on whose twentieth century's analogue Partners in Development is strangely silent. One may share the hope expressed in the title for co-operation between the haves and the have-nots. But without the emergence of something analgous to nineteenth century trade-unionism and political agitation, I can see little hope for increased aid, little hope for preventing a widening of the gap, little hope for an eventual development in partnership.

The Bulletin welcomes approaches from other publications concerned with development, and will normally be happy to agree to the reproduction of articles.