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**REPORT ON THE
INAUGURAL SEMINAR OF THE
ZIMBABWE INSTITUTE OF
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

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ZIMBABWE INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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The Experience of The Institute of Development Studies, U.K.

by

Carlos Fortin, Acting Director,

IDS, Sussex

INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Development Studies of the United Kingdom was formally established in April, 1966, having begun its activities in January of that year. In its decade and a half of existence, the Institute has undergone major changes, whilst at the same time exhibiting a remarkable degree of continuity in its fundamental features. Both those aspects that have changed and those that have remained constant, have been at points a source of practical dilemmas and contradictions as well as intellectual tension and spirited debate. The impact of those dilemmas and tensions in the life of the Institute has on the whole been creative, although at times less so the experience has always been instructive. While the Institute we are now inaugurating is a very different one, a review of that experience might be of use to our hosts. It will be, of course, for them to decide the extent of that usefulness. The following remarks will address themselves first to a review of the activities, organisation and finance of the IDS; they will then examine the main areas of change and continuity, the tensions associated with them and their resolution, sometimes in the form of more or less uneasy compromises; they will conclude by very briefly assessing the contribution of the Institute - emerging from that experience - to the field of development studies and to development.*

FUNCTIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND FINANCE

The IDS is the national British centre concerned with the development of the Third World and relations between rich and poor countries. It engages in three main activities: research, teaching and operational assignments.

Research is organised in terms of problem areas, with a view to drawing together the contributions of specialists in the various social sciences. Until recently, there were four such problem areas:

Human Resources, covering such issues as population and development, with special reference to the case of India; manpower planning and employment questions where a major component was the exploration of the so-called "informal" sector, industrial relations; education and employment; health, primary health care and international aid in the health sector and the role of women in development.

Planning and Government, which has explored problems of training in public administration; planning and public accounting; statistical priorities and systems appropriate for different types of countries; access to public services for the least privileged and the administrative and management problems involved in basic needs strategies and in rural development policies aimed at the poorest.

* I am grateful for the detailed comments on the first draft by Dudley Seers and Tommy Gee. The final text is, of course, my responsibility alone.

Rural Development, whose work has included major projects on rural poverty and on comparative village studies, as well as work on crop storage and post-harvest practices; irrigation and rural development management; seasonality (i.e. seasonal factors that reinforce the persistence of poverty); rural and agricultural technology and its economic, social and political impact; and

International, which has dealt with issues concerning international technology transfer; multinational corporations and their role in development; foreign aid, its forms, uses and effects; inequalities and asymmetries in international economic and political relations, with emphasis on trade and commodities, on cultural diffusion and dependency and on arms and disarmament.

This way of organising research (and operational work) served the Institute well throughout the 1970s. As the current five-year planning period approached, though, the thinking within the Institute and elsewhere was that a new set of foci stemming from, and elaborating on, the previous ones but better geared to the changing world environment were required. The new main areas for the organisation of the research programme are also four: international recession and the emerging world economy of the 1980s; Britain, the EEC and the Third World: interactions and policies; the crisis of development policy and the national strategies in the new context; and rural development and poverty, with emphasis on mechanisms, institutions and policy. The reasoning and the implications of this re-definition will be explored more fully below.

The teaching programme of the Institute comprises short courses for government officials, senior personnel and university teachers and researchers from developing countries, officials from developed country governments and international organisations working on development problems and development workers in community and voluntary organisations in both developing and developed countries.

The main activity is the study seminar. These are four- to six-week periods of intensive and selective study for groups of 15-20 participants from various countries. They are directed by one or more Fellows of the Institute and they usually combine lectures by specialists and practitioners from within and outside the Institute, seminar discussions, presentations by the participants, field visits and in some work of the Institute as well as the perceived needs and demands from Third World governments and organisations. The first study seminar (on Aid and Trade) took place in 1967. Since then, more than 100 seminars have been held (including many organised jointly by the IDS and overseas development institutions, and held overseas), attended by over 2 000 participants from more than 100 countries. Smaller study groups, usually linked to a collaborative research project, have also featured importantly in the study programme, as have conferences, which range from major international gatherings to small workshops. There is also an individual study fellowship programme, providing particular officials and researchers with the chance to spend periods ranging from a few weeks to twelve months studying, reading or writing in liaison with a Fellow of the Institute with interest in the same area of work.

In 1973 the Institute introduced an M.Phil programme in Development Studies. This is a two-year, interdisciplinary course leading to a degree conferred by the University of Sussex. There are up to 24 students in each course, all university graduates from developing as well as developed countries with some practical and field experience of development work. The course has a substantial taught component in the first year, where two units run in parallel, one historical and the other reviewing alternative theories of development (neo-classical economics, structuralism and Marxism). The second year comprises specialised optional units on topics like multinationals, international finance, trade, planning, the state, public finance, socialist political economy, employment, education, rural development and women, and the writing of a 20 000 word thesis.

The Institute also conducts, on behalf of the University of Sussex, a D.Phil programme, which currently has some 30 full-time research students.¹

The Institute has also had a significant component of *operational involvement and consultancy work* for Third World governments, international organisations and development agencies in the developed world. This allows staff both to keep in close touch with the realities of development work as well as providing a chance to make a contribution to policy formulation and development strategy. Some of the major lines of work in the Institute have been closely associated with operational assignments. Thus, the ILO Employment Missions to Colombia (1970), Sri Lanka (1971) and Kenya (1972) focused on the work of the Institute on poverty, unemployment and maldistribution of income, leading later to the joint World Bank/IDS study on *Redistribution with Growth*.²

Organisationally, the Institute is an autonomous body, attached to, but not a part of, the University of Sussex.³ Relations with the University are, of course, close. The Vice-Chancellor is the Chairman of the Governing Body of the Institute, where in addition there is University representation. The Fellows of the Institute are recognised as part of the teaching faculty of the University, and the M.Phil and D.Phil programmes are University degree courses, subject to its rules and regulations and ultimately under the authority of the University Graduate School. The University also provides an organisational model which it is convenient to follow and a service in the handling of the IDS staff payroll. However, the Institute has its own independent decision-making and administrative structure separate from the Senate and Council of the University of Sussex. The superior organ of the Institute is the Governing Body, Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of the University and composed of 22 members appointed by the Minister of Overseas Development - in some cases, in consultation with the Governing Body - plus 3 University representatives appointed by the University Senate; 2 persons appointed by the Board of

1 The graduate programme of the Institute has had close links with Zimbabwe. Roger Riddell and Abby Rubin Riddell are graduates of the 1975-77 M.Phil and Xavier Kadhani, currently at the University of Zimbabwe, was in the 1977-79 course. Zardo Sakala, now working in the Ministry of Manpower Planning and Development, was in the D.Phil programme.

2 H.B. Chenery, et. al., *Redistribution with Growth*, London, Oxford University Press, 1974.

3 A rather unusual device was used to make it a body corporate: it was set up as a company limited by guarantee with a Memorandum and Articles of Association.

international organisations, government agencies, business, the British and international academic community and the British political world in the form of two MPs.

The British Government is represented by the Permanent Secretary of the Overseas Development Administration of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Chief Economist of the FCO. There are currently nine non-British Governors of whom six are from developing countries, including the Zimbabwe High Commissioner in London, Dr Robert Zvinoira, who is also a doctoral graduate of Sussex University. The Governing Body delegates a number of its functions concerning academic matters to a Board of Studies chaired by the Director and composed of six IDS Fellows, elected by the Fellows themselves, two persons appointed by the Minister from the Governing Body, two persons appointed by the University Senate from the Governing Body, two members appointed by the Board of Studies and the Librarian. Other non-voting members are co-opted by the Board of Studies, including the Deputy Director; in the circumstances of the 1970s, it was felt that it would help maintain IDS community spirit also to co-opt representatives of the students and of the trade unions of the academic and clerical staffs. The Governing Body also appoints a Finance and General Purposes Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, responsible to it for the supervision and control of the Institute's financial management.

The management and administration of the Institute are formally the responsibility of the Director, assisted by an Administrative Secretary. The Directorship is a critical appointment, and is made by the Governing Body on such terms as it shall think fit. In practice, he has been appointed every five years.⁴ The body of Fellows plays a large part in the actual running of the Institute, as, apart from electing six members of the Board of Studies, they make up the Committees of the Institute, appointed by the Board of Studies on the proposal of the Director. The main ones are: Standing Committee, whose function is to advise the Director on the day-to-day running of the Institute and act on behalf of the Board of Studies in some cases; a Teaching Committee, a Research and Operational Committee, and a Selection Committee, responsible for the Visiting Fellowship Programme. An Appointments Board, composed of Fellows of the Institute, plus University members and one or two academics from other British universities, plays a vital role as it is responsible for recommending to Board of Studies the appointment of Fellows of the Institute.

These are appointed for fixed periods, usually five years. The Fellows of the Institute do not, therefore, enjoy tenure; they have a right to be considered for re-appointment, though, and in practice, the great majority (but not all) of those who wish to be re-appointed have stayed at the Institute after the Appointments Board has reviewed the relevance and quality of their work.

The Institute is financed primarily with a grant-in-aid from the Overseas Development Administration on the basis of quinquennial budgets. This system of funding provinces

A new Director, Mr Mike Faber, was appointed at the end of 1981 and will assume his functions in April 1982.

flexibility between years, and an arm's length relationship with government. The grant-in-aid represented some 58 per cent of the budget of the Institute in the First Quinquennium, some 66 percent in the Second and some 71 per cent in the Third. The rest of the income is from research grants and consultancy fees (about 30,20 and 15 percent respectively), tuition fees for seminars and courses (between 7 and 11 percent), and miscellaneous income. The grant for the Fourth Quinquennium was agreed after a long debate in which one of the options considered by the government - and, in fact, agreed at one point at ministerial level - was to terminate any grant-in-aid to the Institute by 1986, as part of the government's policy of reducing public expenditure. Following a report from a Working Party set up by the Governing Body charged with proposing a least-cost-to-government solution, the five-year grant was agreed, with the overall budget⁵ going down from £1,9m in 1980-81 to about £1,3m in 1983-84, in 1980 pounds, and the percentage to be covered by the government grant going down to about 58 percent.

CHANGE, CONTINUITY AND TENSIONS

How much does the IDS of 1982 resemble the IDS of 1966? A first most visible difference is in terms of sheer size. The following table (Table 1) shows the numbers in the staff of the Institute at the outset and at the end of each quinquennium:

Table 1

Staffing at IDS (Sussex): 1966-1981

	1966	1971	1976	1981
Academic Staff	8	38	75	63
Other Staff (administrative, secretarial, service, library)	10	43	54	68

This fast rate of growth was the result of a deliberate policy. As the concept of a government-financed institute like IDS was politically somewhat controversial, it was felt necessary, in the words of the first Director, Dudley Seers,

to develop as soon as possible an institution with a sufficient impact for it to be invulnerable to political attacks.⁶

Growth effectively stopped after 1976 and projections for the 1981-1986 quinquennium contemplate, if anything, some reduction in numbers. The Institute of the 1980s will remain, however, some five times larger than the Institute of the 1960s.

⁵ Including the portion of research grants covering additional expenditure incurred on account of the research.

⁶ D. Seers, "Conception, Birth and Early Years: A Personal Interpretation", in IDS, Ten-Year Review and Annual Report, 1976, p.20

A second area of change is that of priority areas for research. The initial emphasis was defined by the dissatisfaction with the conventional approach to development which reduced it to economic growth, whilst neglecting distributional and social aspects which were assumed to be taken care of, in time, by growth. In contrast, a good deal of the Institute's work was premised on the notion that some of the most serious problems of underdevelopment would not be automatically solved by growth; that, indeed, in some cases growth might even exacerbate them.

These were the problems of poverty, unemployment and maldistribution of income whose determinants and processes the Institute set out to examine as a matter of priority. In a way, this biased the work of the Institute somewhat towards the internal dynamics of Third World societies. Even though the Institute was increasingly interested in international flows, technology transfers, multinational corporations and dependency relations at the world level, at the end of the First Quinquennium the implications of development issues for the advanced countries were ignored; "development" to quote Dudley Seers again, "was still a subject dealing with poor countries in the tropics"⁷ By the end of the Second Quinquennium, the report of the Working Party set up by the Governing Body under Professor Paul Streeten to review past work and make recommendations for the next five years proposed additional work on the international aspects of development, particularly in terms of exploring the "interface" between the policies of rich and poor countries. The report also noted new areas of work including the comparative development experience of socialist countries, the role of the state and the role of women in development. A trend towards emphasising the international factors and the structural problems of the industrial countries themselves individually and collectively, as well as the macro-political responses in the developing countries was thus taking shape. The current priorities, listed above, represent a further step in that direction. As will be discussed below, this trend has not been without critics within the Institute.

Changes are also visible in the teaching activities of the Institute. The original thinking behind the notion of a "Special Institution" was closely linked to the concern to provide administrative training to officials of the newly independent countries of the Commonwealth, as exemplified in the 1962 Report of the Committee on Training in Public Administration for Overseas Countries. The actual creation of the Institute moved away from this concern and its underlying assumption that development was essentially a matter of setting up an efficient and honest public service. Still, the training of developing country officials through short courses was a very central feature of the Institute that emerged. This was reinforced by the extent to which additional financial support from the Overseas Development Ministry was provided through Technical Assistance grants for Third World officials to attend study seminars at the Institute. During the first two quinquennia the Institute offered between seven and eight study seminars per year. At the end of the Third Quinquennium, the reduction in technical co-operation funds for these purposes called for

7 Ibid, p.29.

a re-examination of this pattern. Study seminars are a highly labour intensive activity, because of the various procedures involved in the identification of candidates, the processing of their applications by their governments and the granting of British Technical Co-operation awards. Given the Institute's need to become increasingly self-financed, the Working Party Report for the Fourth Quinquennium recommended that the number of study seminars per year be reduced to between two and four, covering topics of particular interest among Third World governments and falling within a recurring pattern. This decision, again, was surrounded by significant discussion about the value of the study seminar programme. We shall come back to this below.

At the same time, and again through a mixture of academic and financial considerations, the M.Phil Programme of the Institute, which initially only accepted students every other year, introduced a yearly intake. Longer non-degree courses were also introduced, in particular a thirteen-week course in Social Statistics for overseas officials, administrators and academic staff. Thus the Institute's study programme has moved closer to that of a British university department, while not completely excluding elements of the original training approach. This has also been the subject of some controversy. Alongside these areas of change, the Institute exhibits some fundamental aspects of continuity.

The basic definition of the functions, in terms of research, teaching and operational involvement remains as relevant today as it was in 1966. If anything, the trend has been to a closer interaction among the various activities. Research feeds the teaching of the Institute, and has helped sharpen the individual character of the M.Phil Programme. It is also the basis on which operational work and consultancies build. Conversely, operational activities have interacted closely with research. As indicated above, three of the most important intellectual projects of the early 1970s (the ILO Employment missions) were commissioned studies, out of which came a whole body of thought that in some sense revolutionised the overall approach within IDS and outside to the meaning of development as well as raising specific questions on the informal sector and marginality.

A second constant element in the Institute's approach is the interdisciplinary nature of its work. From the very beginning, the Institute was keen to look at development, not only from the viewpoint of economists, but from a broad perspective that would incorporate social, political, anthropological and cultural elements. Both the recruitment of staff and the organisation of the work of the Institute have been geared towards this goal of interdisciplinary. Posts have been defined broadly and the ability to work with practitioners of other disciplines (as well as to combine research with teaching and consultancy work) have been used as central criteria. The work has not been organised along disciplinary lines, but in terms of problem areas that would cut across disciplinary boundaries.

A third constant element has been the autonomy of the Institute in its relationship with both Government and the University of Sussex. Whilst over half of the finance of the Institute is provided by the Overseas Development Administration, the Government have no other say in the running of the affairs of the Institute than that afforded by the presence of Government representatives in the Governing Body, the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Board of Studies. Evidently, the Government's powers to decide on

the financial grant to the Institute every five years are quite significant, as are its powers to appoint Governors who, in turn, appoint the Director. Throughout the history of the Institute, though, such powers have been exercised in consultation with all other parties involved including the Institute itself. The relationship has not been free from tension and even conflict, as will be discussed below, but on the whole, it has proven that it is possible to set up an institution financed by the Government and with links of a professional and applied kind to it which is nonetheless independent to comment on Government policy as well as to develop its own lines of work. Therein lies its strength.

Finally, another constant feature of the Institute throughout its history has been its pluralistic orientation. The Institute includes within it a variety of theoretical, analytical, political and ideological views, which nonetheless can co-exist in a creative dialogue. With one exception to be discussed below, the Institute does not take positions as such in political matters, and per contra its staff are protected from political pressure by those responsible for its direction.

As suggested, both the areas of change and those of continuity have been associated at points with practical difficulties, tension and controversy. The increased size of the Institute has made it more difficult to integrate work and has raised new issues concerning personal relations and management procedures. At the beginning, when there were fewer staff everybody knew everybody else and what work they were doing, and decision-making often took place in staff meetings which, as Richard Jolly has written, entailed no more than "inviting everyone along and bringing a few extra chairs into someone's office"⁸ Growth changed all that.

Personal interaction began to concentrate on smaller groups where common interests, knowledge of the work of others (indeed, in some cases, knowledge of who others were!) became less general. Various ways of re-establishing an overall integrated intellectual climate in the Institute have been tried, including, most notably, the running of Institute-wide seminars to hear progress reports on work by Fellows, or to hear from visitors. The results have been mixed; the Institute still has a problem of establishing a meaningful dialogue among a large number of academics of varying interests. At points, voices have been heard suggesting that the solution is to reduce the size of the Institute. On the whole, the opposite view has prevailed.

Size has also affected decision-making and participation. "Memos and forms started to take the place of face to face communication"⁹ The committee system was set up, and meetings began to multiply. This raised the potential conflict between participation on the one hand, and efficiency and optimal utilisation of time on the other. Both sets of values are recognised as important. In practice, the Institute has moved somewhat cyclically from periods of increased participation to periods of benign disinterest on the part of the Fellows

8 R. Jolly, "The Work of the Institute - From the Perspective of 1976", in *IDS, Ten-Year Review.*, op. cit., p.7.

9 D. Seers, op. cit., p.25.

inescapable, and all that can be hoped for is a reasonable balance between participation, effectiveness and productivity.

The change in research priorities described above, has been a source of continuous and at points, passionate debate among members of the Institute. This is, of course, understandable. We live in a period of world upheaval, with massive structural change and great social problems. The members of the Institute are deeply concerned about these problems and committed to helping overcome them; discussions about the content of the Institute's work are, therefore, not mere intellectual exercises. On the other hand, a clear analytical assessment of the import and limits of development work is a prerequisite for the effectiveness of the Institute. The issue was put at its sharpest by Dudley Seers, founder of the Institute and its first Director.

The original philosophy of the place, he suggested, had a paternalistic, indeed neo-colonial undertone. It was a question of helping poor people in poor countries to sort out their problems presumably because they were unable to sort them out for themselves. While there could have been some justification for that approach in the sixties, as the advanced countries moved through the traumas of the seventies into the deep recession of the eighties, and the so-called Third World became increasingly differentiated with some countries reaching relatively high levels of industrialisation, such pretensions - so the argument ran - became increasingly untenable.¹⁰ The work of the Institute should concentrate on the global aspects of development issues - such as energy and finance - and on the external and internal implications for all countries including those previously classified as "developed" for which, therefore, development studies were assumed to be irrelevant. This view was hotly contested by other members of the Institute, who have sought to vindicate the contribution that the Institute can make to the relief of poverty and inequality in the Third World. The Institute has built up a store of knowledge and experience which it believes can be put to good use in the developing world by disseminating through officials, scholars and developing workers in those countries, and avoiding any temptation to impose solutions. Neither side has prevailed and the priorities for the Fourth Quinquennium recognise both the increasing importance of the rich country and interface aspects of development problems, as well as continuing work on poverty at the micro level in the Third World.

The continuing co-existence of research, training and operational activities, while providing the opportunity for mutual enrichment, has also generated problems. There are incompatibilities between fieldwork for research and consultancies and continuing teaching loads. Requests for consultancy work come about in unpredictable ways and create difficulties for the planning of Institute activities and deployment of Institute staff. When the Institute was set up, Fellows were encouraged to spend at least one-third of their

¹⁰ For a more general statement of the argument, see D. Seers, "Back to the Ivory Tower? The Professionalisation of Development Studies and their Extension to Europe", *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1977, pp. 6-11; and "European Conscience and European Social Science", Presidential Address at the Triennial Assembly of the European Association of Development Institutes (EADI), Milan, September, 1978, published in *Europe's Role in World Development*, FINAFRICA-CARIPO, Milan, 1981.

time in work overseas. At the present time, the problem is the opposite: how to limit the absence of Fellows from the Institute and thereby provide a continuing critical mass for research, teaching and administration. The new financial arrangements for the Fourth Quinquennium do not make matters any easier, inasmuch as they require an increasing amount of revenue from consultancy work as well as for Fellows to take periods of unpaid leave.

A recent proposal to deal with the problem was to separate organisationally the three functions by creating somewhat independent structures for research, teaching and consultancy and assigning Fellows predominantly to one or the others. On balance, however, it was felt that the interaction among the three functions was too important a component of the definition of the Institute to be compromised in this way. The question of the compatibility of the demands of teaching, consultancy and research remains thus a major and continuing challenge in the planning and management of the Institute's work.

The interdisciplinarity of the Institute has also been the source of some difficulties. Academic life in the U.K. and its ancillary activities proceed largely along disciplinary lines, and, therefore, there has been strong pressure from academic sources for the Institute to stick to more conventional terms of reference related to a particular discipline, rather than to follow a problem-oriented approach wherever it may lead. The demand to make the Institute's economic work more "rigorous", i.e. more in line with formal rules of disciplinary excellence; for Fellows to publish in standard professional journals, which of course are not read by the vast majority of the people to whom development policy is addressed; or the need for research grant applications to be submitted to disciplinary committees of the funding bodies (the Social Science Research Council of the U.K. does not have a development studies committee; applications for research grants from the Institute go to the committees on economics, sociology, political science, etc., while in most cases spanning several such disciplines) are examples of these pressures. The Institute has resisted the temptation to fall into traditional lines; on the other hand it has recognised that interdisciplinarity cannot be used as a pretext to disregard analytical rigour. This line of tension overlaps with another one: how much of the Institute's work should be devoted to the development of theory as opposed to the somewhat eclectic tackling of applied questions? Once again, opinions have differed; the Institute has nonetheless agreed to devote some of its resources to work on structuralist theories of the world economy and of alternative - neo-Ricardian and Marxian - theories of international trade.

The changes in the teaching programme have also been surrounded by controversy. It has already been suggested that the reduction in the number of study seminars and the expansion of the M.Phil Programme were initially prompted by financial considerations.

However, a wider debate took place before the decisions were made. Views at points differed sharply. The study seminar programme was for some yet another neo-colonial remnant, increasingly outdated as the facilities to provide short training courses proliferate in the developing countries themselves. The M.Phil Programme, on the other hand, was a regular university course, and Third World students would come to it for the same reasons as they would go to any good university course anywhere. The counter-argument was that

the essence of study seminars was to provide a venue for a creative exchange of experience and views. Third World officials would not come only to learn but to exchange knowledge, both among themselves and with Institute staff. Paradoxically, but realistically, this would be facilitated by the exchange taking place in *Brighton* rather than in a Third World capital, where there was the danger of overemphasising the host country inputs and problems, with the attendant misgivings and even rejection among the participants from other countries. This would also free the activity from the political tensions and pressures which would be raised in many countries overseas where development issues are sensitive. By contrast, the M.Phil Programme was - in this view - a clear case of supplanting local or third country training. The compromise reached in the Working Party report did not fully satisfy either side, but was one that both could live with. Most Fellows, anyway, did not feel as strongly as the two polar viewpoints described above would suggest.

The relationship with the British government, through the Overseas Development Administration/Ministry¹¹ has had its share of tension as well. The autonomy of the Institute to define its own lines of work and to carry them out has never been in dispute. But there has been a lingering feeling among many ODA officials that the Institute's work is too academic or too radical to be of use to aid officials charged with dealing with real life problems. The Institute has countered by insisting that its role is not primarily to contribute to the day-to-day management of British aid and technical assistance programmes, but rather to help put the issues of the day in a longer perspective. This does not preclude Institute staff from participating in the operational work of ODA when so required, and indeed this has often been the case.

But this difference in perspective has perhaps - and regrettably - reduced the number of such instances of collaboration. On the other hand, the tension has had creative impacts. The issues and questions raised by ODA officials from their practical viewpoint have at times helped the Institute to re-examine its assumptions and to look for a surer grounding in the realities of development work; conversely, the Institute's longer term emphasis on poverty and rural development has influenced the overall aid and development strategy of the British government, as expressed in the 1975 ODM White Paper *More Aid for the Poorest*, which remains official policy to date. A central factor making this positive interaction possible has been the financial arrangement based on a five-year grant as opposed to one that has to be negotiated annually. This, as Richard Jolly has put it, has allowed the IDS to be "an institution that is not only independent from government, but is seen to be so".¹² In the training area, the influence of the views of the officials has, in fact, been somewhat greater, since the short course programme has been substantially financed through Technical Co-operation grants. Differences in approach in that area came to a rather dramatic head in 1970, when the Overseas Development Ministry refused to make technical assistance available for a study seminar on the state corporation whose brochure

11 Since its creation in 1964, the Overseas Development department of the British government has been called a Ministry by Labour governments and an Administration by Conservative governments.

12 R. Jolly, *op. cit.*, p.15.

involved in minimising compensation". The Institute refused to change those words and decided to go ahead with the seminar anyway, with the participants' fees financed by their own governments. Again, the conflict had a positive result in that it helped clarify the relative role of the Institute and the Ministry; an understanding was reached whereby, once the Board of Studies - in which the Ministry is represented - approves the overall study programme and the broad description of each seminar, the government should not refuse technical assistance funds on account of the specific wording of any study seminar brochure.

The pluralism of the Institute has also been a source of tension. In a field so pervaded with value issues, the pressure for the IDS to take institutional positions in the political field have been, at times, considerable. The Institute has so far resisted them.

Inasmuch as it contains within a wide range of different theoretical and ideological perspectives - from radical socialism to right-of-centre liberalism, from Marxism to fairly orthodox neoclassical economics¹³ - institutional views could only be arrived at by disregarding those of some of the Fellows. This the Institute has decided not to do. As a result of this overall approach, the Institute does not take institutional views about the governments with which it deals - although, of course, individual Fellows do, and often very vocally.¹⁴ The only exception to this policy of institutional neutrality in matters of politics has to do with South Africa and apartheid. It is Institute policy not to collaborate with any institutions or individuals that are part of the apartheid system. This rules out formal contacts with the government of South Africa or its agencies, with segregated institutions and with any Bantustan organisation. This departure from the general policy is justified on several counts: it recognises the fundamental moral issues raised by the apartheid system; it expresses the unanimous view of the members of the Institute; and is a pre-requisite for the credibility of the Institute's work in Africa generally.

One consequence of the pluralist approach of the Institute is the principle that, by and large, Fellows define their own areas of work and their research interests. To be sure, appointments are made with a view to covering priority areas of work, and the internal machinery of decision-making helps introduce some overall coherence. But basically, the Institute respects people's rights to different ways of approaching problems, and does not centrally prescribe what research Fellows should do. The view that has prevailed is that the best research stems from that fundamental concern and curiosity that a given intellectual puzzle evokes in an inquiring individual mind. After that, the meeting of minds, exchanges and discussion as well as institutional objectives can help modify, expand, re-define or focus the area; but the initial spark must be there. The application of this approach entails, of course, the danger of the Institute's work becoming a disparate collection of individual

13 The Institute is sometimes categorized by outsiders as radical, even Marxist, or alternatively as a pawn of the British establishment. In fact, political positions span a good deal of the whole spectrum from left to right. It is fair to say though, that IDS staff does not include extreme political conservatives (nor hard-line Chicago monetarists). This is probably more a function of self-exclusion than of Institute's policy.

14 This can, of course, make in many cases the difference between collaboration or its absence: if the individual Fellows with the relevant specialism are not prepared to take part in an activity on behalf a government they find distasteful, the activity becomes unviable. The Institute would not contemplate, here any more than anywhere else, instructing them to participate against their will. It is interesting to note that since the 1970s the Institute has been a haven for academic political refugees from the Third World.

Institute has tried gently to steer individual work in given directions has varied. In fact, a somewhat cyclical pattern seems to have evolved: individual puzzles lead to intense work and reflection, and accumulated insight; those then begin to fall into broader patterns, and team work develops.

When collective projects have run their course, and the time comes to ask new initial questions, the pattern becomes somewhat more individualistic again. On the whole, the Institute may have erred on the side of allowing Fellows too much rather than too little freedom to define their work.

CONCLUSIONS: IDS' EXPERIENCE AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT

In assessing the contribution of the IDS to development thinking at the end of the Second Quinquennium, Richard Jolly, then Director of the Institute, identified several aspects:

- the introduction of issues of poverty, employment and income distribution as central to the very notion of development;
- the emphasis on non-government agents in development - the diversity of informal sector activities, the importance of individual entrepreneurial or group initiative or direct political activities outside, and often in opposition to, government itself;
- the concern for the political-economic interests which prevent the adoption and serious implementation of progressive policies: an interest in the nature of the state and its role in development and underdevelopment;
- an emphasis on the impact of rich country technologies in the patterns of employment, consumption and income distribution in the Third World, and the accompanying effects on international income transfers and bargaining power;
- the perspective of development within a world economy in which Third World countries relate asymmetrically to the advanced world.¹⁵

Five years later, this assessment remains relevant. Other items, though, must be added: the application of development theory to the understanding of the less developed countries or regions of the advanced world, in the work on the "European periphery"; the identification of rural-urban inequalities as a major theoretical and policy parameter in the "urban bias"

15 R. Jolly, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10

The list of the more specific contributions of IDS members to the analysis of development is, of course, much longer; a comprehensive list of works produced at the IDS would exceed 1 000 titles of books, articles, papers, reports and theses.¹⁶ The Research Review of the Third Quinquennium identifies 18 headings under which substantial work has taken place. Equally long would be any enumeration of the contribution of IDS to the tackling of concrete development problems in the Third World; activities ranging from the provision of training through study seminars to participation in missions, consultancies and applied research work would number in the hundreds.

How different would the overall contribution look if the Institute had faced in a different way the various challenges, dilemmas and contradictions explored above? It is difficult to imagine alternative approaches that could have produced a wider range of areas covered; on the other hand many approaches resulting in a narrowing and focusing of them could have been possible. Would we have wanted to do it differently? Most Institute Fellows, if asked, would probably identify some areas for which the answer would be yes. By and large, it is unlikely that a radically different approach would command general assent. What is very likely, though, is that most would be wary of extrapolating the Institute's experience to other contexts. The need for institutions overseas to develop their own priorities and programmes has been a recurrent theme in the contributions of IDS members to the several collaborative organisations the Institute has been involved in - and indeed helped set up - notably the Development Studies Association of the U.K., the European Association of Development Institutes and the Interregional Co-ordinating Committee of Development Associations.¹⁷ At a time when a growing number of development analysts and practitioners are questioning the usefulness of European theories (whether neo-classical, functionalist, Keynesian or orthodox Marxist) for the understanding of the problems of developing countries, this is a necessary caveat on which to end this account of the experience of the Institute of Development Studies.

16 IDS, Development Studies. A Select List of Writings of IDS Members, 1966-76; Catalogue of Publications by Members of IDS, Spring 1979; Publications Sales Catalogue, Spring 1981.

17 The Interregional Co-ordinating Committee of Development Associations was set up following a First Interregional Meeting on Development Research, Communication and Education held at IDS in 1976 on the initiative of Dudley Seers, then President of the European Association of Development Institutes. In addition to the latter, its membership includes the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Latin America Social Science Council (CLACSO), the Association of Arab Research Institutes and Centres for Economic and Social Development (AICARDES) and the Association of Development Research and Training Institutes of Asia and the Pacific (ADIPA).



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