

DEVELOPMENT AID: A SYMPOSIUM

In 1968 the foreign aid programmes of both Great Britain and the United States have been cut. On both the Right and Left there is increasing scepticism about the ethics and the efficacy of the types of aid which have been given to developing countries. As Hugh Stephenson remarked in an article in The Times of September 26th, there is a crisis over the future of aid.

The crisis immediately concerns the willingness and the ability of developed countries to provide aid in the quantities that have been available so far in the Development Decade. It arises, however, from a growing sensitivity to the complexity of the development process: this produces a recognition, not only that aid may be actively harmful in its effects on social and political structures in recipient countries, but also that the range of its efficacy may be extremely limited even where its effects are judged as beneficial. There is an associated crisis over the ethics of aid: is it merely another expression of the domination of poor countries by richer, is the language of aid and development merely a rhetoric covering such domination? Is it not only aid which may be bilateral but development itself - a sharing-out between the governments of developed countries and the political classes of Africa, Asia and Latin America? Is development only a growth industry for elites and economists?

This symposium was originally based on a review by Enoch Powell of Gunnar Myrdal's Asian Drama, and we reprint this review because of its significance as a political document. So as to provide a focus for general discussion, we proposed to our contributors the following questions and they form a basis for the articles in this section:-

1) Is the idea of transferable techniques of 'development' and 'growth' essentially objectionable in its assumptions? If not, is it futile in practice? Is this because 'development' has been too narrowly conceived?

2) In what direction does our conception of 'development' need to be changed or expanded to make it possible for the contribution of industrialised countries to be more beneficial than damaging?

3) Enoch Powell remarks that "'aid' implies an arrogant presumption on the part of western countries, an ambition to substitute one's own values for those of others, which is more than the older colonial imperialisms.....ever dreamt of." Is this seen as the case by recipient countries? What kinds of change would be necessary in aid policies, or in fact in international structures, to detach this presumption from aid? Or is the notion of aid intrinsically arrogant?

4) Is more aid required, less aid, or a different kind of aid? What should people and governments in industrialised countries do to assist the promotion of social and economic opportunities in less developed countries?