

WHITHER SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ?

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Social objectives are increasingly assimilated into development concepts today. Three areas needed to understand this are: (1) improved social indicators (2) the relationship of technology to social change and (3) the social ethic in relation to—a person; a people.

Because increasing Gross National Product of poor countries did not trickle down to the poor, new indices are developing to measure the quality of life of persons. One of these—the nutritional status of persons—is a sensitive index, because unlike incomes, it is detrimental to individuals at both ends of the spectrum.

Technical knowledge and its polarisation both between and within nations, spurred population growth. Technology grows exponentially and in anticipation of needs. Social changes are slow and they are rather responses to needs. Because of the disparity in the rate of change of the two phenomena, large motivational efforts in the latter become mandatory, if ordinary people are to benefit socially.

A person's social development is analysed by the way he expresses his genetic potential—physically, socially and creatively, as he grows. That of a people, by the social ethic displayed as populations grow, according to the sigmoid curve. Several social phenomena in developed and underdeveloped countries, which have manifest growth/divergent modes may need to usher equilibrium/convergent modes to realise the desired social development. Humanity faces an inflection in its population curve for the first time in history. The accompanying social circumstances are likely to be complex, dynamic and little understood because they involve ecological systems.

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