
Conference Preview

SID promotes the 'Global Village'

by Peter Rush

On July 18 an expected 3,000 people from all over the globe will gather in Baltimore to discuss ways to return the developing nations to colonial backwardness and degradation. Under the auspices of the Society for International Development (SID), the umbrella "Third World development" organization run since the late 1970s by open advocates of denying advanced technologies to underdeveloped countries, the attendees will be bombarded with "share the poverty" policies designed to "ruralize" large parts of the developing sector.

Aurelio Peccei, founder of the fascist Club of Rome which advocates reducing the world's population by 2 billion people by early in the next century, will preside over a panel on "Limits to Growth."

The SID has undertaken the largest-scale effort in the world to make respectable the attack on what the Society terms "conventional development strategy," first launched by members of the former British Colonial Office in the late 1960s. The title of the meeting, "The Emerging Global Village," connotes their "post-industrial," Aquarian goals.

In the midst of the worst economic crisis since the last depression, not a single panel addresses this question, nor is one of the hundreds of panels devoted to the high-interest-rate question, the single greatest threat to the developing sector today. Instead, an entire day is largely devoted to "grass-roots people's organizations" assigned to demand "decentralization" rather than industrially-based development.

Numerous panels deal with energy questions, pushing "alternate" and "renewable" sources, primarily solar power, an approach so expensive as to bankrupt any developing nation that might attempt to meet its energy needs in this way. Other panels deal with "meeting basic needs," fostering "appropriate technologies," and deurbanizing the Third World because cities have ostensibly failed. A featured speaker is Willis Harman, of Stanford Research Institute in Palo Alto, California, in a panel on "New Issues in Science and Development." Harman is the author of a study claiming that the "self-image" of Judeo-Christian man as creator of moral and material progress must be replaced.

The keynote address at the plenary, to be delivered

by Dudley Seers of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at Sussex University, England, will lay out the real theme of the conference: to lead the 3 billions in the developing sector backward to Stone Age tribalism in a dog-eat-dog Hobbesian world. Seers, a former British Colonial Office employee, was tapped in 1967 to head the newly formed IDS, 95 percent funded by the British government. From that platform he led the effort to get the SID to adopt his colonial policies of "appropriate technologies," labor-intensive employment, and denial of advanced technologies to developing countries. Seers and his colleagues at IDS, including Richard Jolly, Seers's successor as head of IDS and the designer of the program for this conference, have led the battle to convince the nations of the Third World that industrialization has failed in their countries, and that true development is impossible for them.

By 1976, this doctrine had become hegemonic in Robert McNamara's World Bank and in the State Department's AID (McNamara, AID director Peter McPherson, and former U.S. aid official Edwin Martin are also speaking in Baltimore), as well as in NATO and the OECD—but not in the developing sector itself. At that time, Seers laid out the next phase of his attack on the developing sector: the effort to foster tribalism and social breakdown. He called in print for fostering "traditional customs . . . preserving and developing shrines and monuments, supporting traditional crafts, etc."—i.e., maintaining backward cultures. These customs "appear as barriers against modern consumption styles and technologies," and "a development plan will need to devote substantial resources to reinforcing" what he accurately describes as "obstacles to development when this was synonymous with economic growth." Inflows of capital and technology he labeled "rape." Seers concluded this 1976 piece by calling for increased arms expenditures in the underdeveloped nations. Wars for dwindling resources are the center of colonial depopulation policy.

Flanking Seers will be Claude Cheysson, the French Foreign Minister, and anti-industrialization "friend of the Third World," and Mahbub ul-Haq, formerly of the World Bank who led the campaign in the early 1970s to convince the developing nations they could never reach Western consumption levels. He extols the "Chinese model" of autarchic, labor-intensive austerity, and argues that foreign aid is harmful for the Third World.

Also speaking at the opening session is Raul Prebisch, author of austerity policies in Argentina in 1957, leading advocate of light-industry "development" in place of heavy industry, and the first head of UNCTAD. But, all three slots reserved in early conference brochures for opening speeches by President Reagan and other world leaders are still vacant: conference organizers are still scrambling to get at least one leading administration figure to open the session, so far without success.