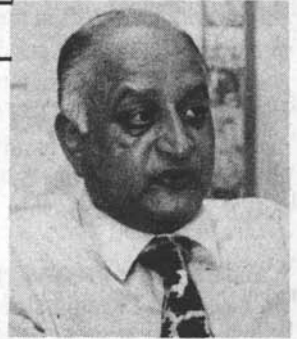

Interview: Dr. Satish C. Seth



'India's obvious choice is to enter the space age'

Dr. Satish C. Seth, one of India's leading Futurologists, was interviewed at *EIR*'s New York office by editor Nora Hamerman on June 16. He is currently working with the Indian government's Department of Science and Technology in New Delhi. He is the author of a commentary entitled, "Population is a Resource" in the April 1984 issue of *Fusion Asia* magazine.

Dr. Seth came to the United States to attend Worldview '84 in Washington, D.C., to which he had been invited in 1983 by the World Future Society. The conference (see report, *EIR*, July 3, pp. 52-57) was described by some shocked developing-sector guests as an "occidental bazaar," dedicated to pushing strategies to stop the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, wreck all national sovereignties, and block population growth by any means—including one Western panelist's exhortation for a "short atomic war." As the following excerpts from *EIR*'s discussion with Dr. Seth reveal, the view of long-range planners in the world's largest democracy, India, is quite the opposite of this zero-growth, post-industrial fanaticism.

EIR: Can you describe your views as a Futurologist?

Dr. Seth: My major interests, in thinking of the future, are what brought me into contact with your organization, through the study on "India in the Year 2020" [issued jointly by the Fusion Energy Foundation and *Executive Intelligence Review*]. The three themes of that study were: 1) the relevance of nuclear energy to socio-economic issues; 2) upgrading manpower by education; and 3) large-scale water management.

These were precisely the three areas which had been the concerns of the Futurology Panel of the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India, of which I had been member-secretary for 12 years, from 1971 to 1983.

That is how I came in touch with the Fusion Energy Foundation.

EIR: You favor nuclear energy, but in North America, "futurist" generally connotes people who are opposed to the broad use of nuclear energy, and have an Aquarian outlook. . . .

Dr. Seth: This is nonsense. . . . Let us not forget India is a great democracy like the U.S.A. Technology is an important tool of democratization. Technology is what has made it possible for the Queen and flower gardener to buy the same pair of stockings.

The problem of all technology is not understanding from what it has originated. . . . It is footloose and it travels. The question is in what direction is it traveling, who wants to entice it and change its direction, in what time and at what cost? . . .

India, having lost the industrial revolution, cannot afford to lose the technological revolution.

India is in the space age, atomic energy, ocean development, and electronics. But people ask us to live in the 16th century. But should India, one of the greatest democracies, whose electorate is larger than *both* the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. follow that advice? For 35 years they have voted every fifth year. Nobody supports this democracy. Your country supports military dictatorships. What kind of justice is this?

EIR: What are the options for India?

Dr. Seth: There are two scenarios profiled for India for the next 20 years. One is the marginal change scenario; the other is the optimal change scenario. What's the difference?

Marginal change means no major intervention. If, for example, India in 1970 had 30% literacy, and in 1980 40% literacy, then in the year 2000 it would have 60% literacy, at the present rate. But we cannot accept that. We want a quantum jump—100% literacy in 20 years.

How? By going up to the frontiers of knowledge—*now*. Not step by step, from the 16th, to the 17th, to the 18th century. And for that, God bless Mrs. Gandhi, who is for science and technology.

The three ideas sown by the Fusion Energy Foundation's futuristic plan for India were also the stable base for Indian thinkers. Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the father of the space age for India, thought of an agro-nuclear complex. His mentor, Homi Bhabha, had already pushed India into the Atomic Club.

Now some members of this club practice Untouchability.

EIR: What do you mean?

Dr. Seth: I mean, denying India nuclear technology.

EIR: In addition to the issue of nuclear energy, you also mentioned manpower development as a point of agreement with the FEF-EIR program for India.

Dr. Seth: India's constitutional obligation is to provide universal, free, compulsory primary education for all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years. In the 6-14 age group today there are more than 100 million children. Fifty percent of them are out of school today, for various reasons. By the turn of the century, there will be plus or minus 145 million children!

This presents a challenge to the world's topmost educators and communicators. Forget for a moment even about the content. If you follow traditional educational techniques of teacher, textbook, and classroom, then we should open a school for 250 pupils every 20 minutes for the next 20 years, around the clock.

One percent of the Indian population today is primary school teachers. Is it possible, is it manageable, how do we train those teachers? What is the minimum salary they can be paid? Can the Indian education ministry afford it?

The concern of the Futurologists is to explore the alternatives: 1) to look at the numerous directions of *change*; 2) and as our supreme obligation, to tell people how to manage that change.

India's obvious choice is to enter the space age. We must develop a communications satellite and teach the majority of the population with education and skill-oriented messages. We used experimentally the SITE [Satellite Instructional Television Experiment] programs from the United States, beaming classes in six languages into 2,400 villages. We have to be the vanguard. We went to Antarctica—we don't want to miss it.

The United States has 6% of the world's population and consumes 54% of the world's resources—

EIR: —which means those resources must be expanded.

Dr. Seth: Of course, but then the United States preaches "global population control." The management of population needs is undoubtedly a problem. A small family is a matter of ease. But national population is a *resource*, an asset. And for a country committed to use the best of science and technology, if there's an honest sharing of science and technology, after all, knowledge is a heritage of mankind.

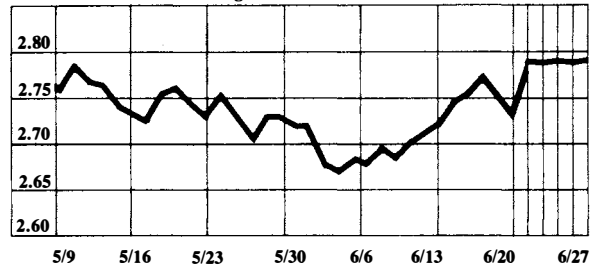
Are all countries willing to share this heritage equitably? Or are we repeating the history of technological imperialism and neo-colonialism?

To conclude: The time is ripe for leading statesmen of every country to work for a better future for all societies and all countries, and we must explore the ways and means to do this.

Currency Rates

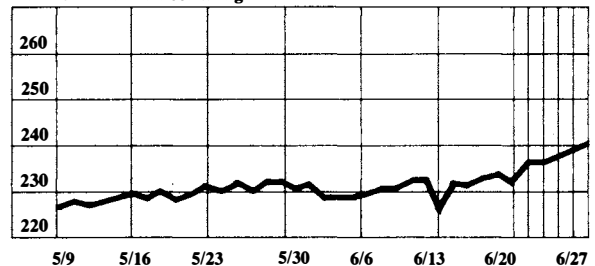
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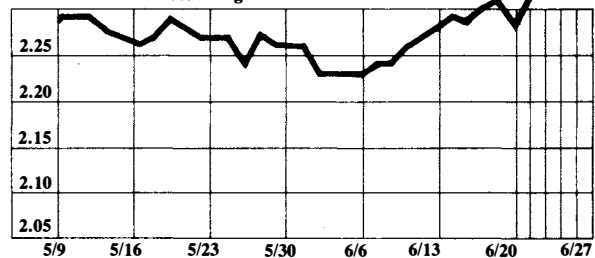
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