

To devote a special number to the examination of the gross disparities between the richer and the poorer peoples of the world is, fortunately, no longer either a pioneer or a maverick thing to do. One index of this was, of course, the significantly and impressively inter-denominational Sign-in in December. What we offer in our current issue, therefore, is an exercise in further exposition and popularization of the issues involved, with a view to strengthening and informing the momentum required.

And this is the first point to note. We align ourselves with the conclusion of the Pearson Report: 'The widening gap between the developed and the developing countries has become a central issue of our time. . . . Our travels and studies have convinced us that *we have come to a turning point*. On all sides we sense a weariness and a search for new directions' (*Partners in Development*, Pall Mall Press, 1969, pp. 3–5, italics supplied).

At this juncture of doubt and reappraisal, then, we must first recapitulate the facts. In detail these are obviously complex, but the gross facts are starkly clear. They have been expressed perhaps nowhere more accurately and graphically than in the first of Jonathan Power's excellent series of pamphlets written for *Christian Aid*: 'A recent United Nations Survey (FAO, 1965) concluded that one-fifth of the population of the poor countries are so poor that they are actually starving and another three-fifths suffer from malnutrition; that is, they are on diets that do not give them the physical ability to cope with life. That leaves only one-fifth who have got enough food in their bellies to take a step forward, assuming that they have no other problems.' And what makes these disparities even worse is that, as it is generally agreed, they will continue to get worse, *if left to themselves*, the rich becoming even richer and the poor poorer.

Once exposed to such facts, we must make a judgement. This is twofold. The first judgment is a pure value judgment. And once again the Pearson Commission is unequivocal: whilst acknowledging that poverty must be fought at home, it affirms that it must also be fought abroad: 'The war against poverty and deprivation begins at home but it must not end there' (p. 8). And so it returns to the question *why* the rich countries should seek to help the other nations even though they are saddled with heavy social and economic problems of their own. The answer comes straight out: 'The simplest

answer to the question is a moral one: that it is only right for those who have to share with those who have not' (p. 8). This is the spontaneous response of the natural humanitarian conscience. But for a Christian this response finds abundant reinforcement in his tradition. St Thomas Aquinas was merely articulating a patristic tradition recently rediscovered when he affirmed quite clearly that the world's resources are intended to be used for the benefit of *all* men, so that it is only the equitable *distribution* of these resources which it is man's responsibility to arrange (2a2ae, 66, 1—2, 7; 32, 5; 38, 5; 61, 1—2). The clear implication of this subordinate character of the so-called right of private property, namely, that a failure to ensure such equitable distribution voluntarily must, if necessary, be made good through suitable laws by governments, is spelled out in *Populorum Progressio*: 'If there should arise a conflict "between acquired private rights and primary community exigencies" it is the responsibility of public authorities "to look for a solution, with the active participation of individuals and social groups"' (§§22–23). And it is entirely consistent with this principle that the Pope should have gone on to say: 'Development demands bold transformations, innovations that go deep. Urgent reforms should be undertaken without delay' (§ 32). Secondly, however, not only is such a fight against world poverty morally imperative, it is, for the first time in the world's history, technically feasible: 'We live at a time when the ability to transform the world is only limited by faintness of heart or narrowness of vision' (*Partners in Development*, p. 11).

The facts having been seen, and a judgment made, it remains only to *do* something about it. And it is here that the sheer size and complexity of the problem brings the risk that anything we do or want to do will run into the sands. This will, however, be the case only to the extent that any individual or group efforts are not integrated into the now rapidly evolving sense and outline of what Lady Jackson had already called a 'new "Recovery Programme"' (*The Clergy Review*, July, 1969), and what the Pearson Commission has crystallized as a call for a co-ordinated and coherent *strategy* on a world scale. It must of course be emphasized that any such strategy must indeed be for the development of the world as one whole. In other words, the concept of the welfare state which has gradually become accepted amongst the advanced nations through the courageous persistence of initially a few visionary pioneers must now be extended to the world as a whole. And this is why *prophecy* is complementary to *feasibility*, not opposed to it (cf. *New Christian*, 30th October, 1969). And it is within such a total perspective that the articles which we publish this month take their joint and several place.

Acceptance of the premise of an overall strategy for the development of the world cannot, however, conceal for us the presence and the necessity of a fundamental option. The most important single

concept of the Pearson Commission's Report is no doubt this: 'Both sides have learned that co-operation for development means more than a simple transfer of funds. It means a set of new relationships which must be founded on mutual understanding and self-respect' (p. 6, whence the very title of the Report, *Partners in Development*; and cf. pp. 9, 10, 14, 17, 22, 52, especially chapter 6, pp. 124 ff, 169, 213). But to affirm this is implicitly to take up a particular political and philosophical stance, and this is that *co-operation* is both more natural and noble for man than *conflict*. Whilst it is undeniable that 'change is, itself, intrinsically disruptive' (p. 7, and cf. p. 53), it is for each man to decide this question for himself: whether man is being more authentically himself when he acts on the principle that the technological and human forces and disruptions released by man can be assumed and redirected purposively by man in partnership than when he acts on the principle of inevitable conflict and violence, on a basically Marxist model (cf. e.g. 'The Alternatives to Aid', *New Christian*, 27th November, 1969, p. 12).

For the Christian, surely, there can be no real doubt on *this* question either. And here *Populorum Progressio* is again directly pertinent. When and if the fall-out of these turbulent times ultimately settles, it will surely be this encyclical which will remain as the outstanding contribution of the present Pope. For here is a crystallization and summary of the Church's new sense of self-identity in the contemporary world: uniting as it does a genuine social concern humbly relearned from the world with a spiritual vision of man in his true co-operative stature and dignity; re-interpreting in global terms its traditional lore and gradation of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; and so bringing together in a new balance temporal commitment and its own specific transcendental aspiration. Accepting at once that the development of each man intrinsically requires and implies the development of all men and that the production and equitable distribution of consumer goods are the conditions of such a strategy of integral development, it nevertheless offers beyond all this a vision of inter-communion in love expressed through and in terms of the play of work—the exploration, negotiation and fulfilment of inter-personal relationships in terms of the material world and its goods and symbols.

It is in this spirit that as Christians we need to heed the appeal to become Partners in Development:

In short, we face an essential need and an unprecedented opportunity. International development is a great challenge of our age. Our response to it will show whether we understand the implications of inter-dependence or whether we prefer to delude ourselves that the poverty and deprivation of the great majority of mankind can be ignored without tragic consequences for all (p. 11).

P.L.