

PLURALISM AND DEVELOPMENT:
INTER-RELATIONSHIPS

Following the separate intensive discussions on the dimensions of pluralism and patterns of social and economic development in the context of island communities, an attempt was made to examine the inter-relationships between both. It was recognised that, in the formulation and execution of development plans, strategies had to be worked out taking into account particular aspects of the plural nature of the society. In addition, it was felt that the various elements in the plural society should be seen to benefit from the results of such development plans. Failure to give adequate attention to the "divides" within a society could result in the best conceived plans not achieving the expected outcome.

The Seminar also noted that the execution of certain development plans for which inadequate preparatory work had been done in anticipating the social implications of various measures could lead to new cleavages within the society. It was stressed that economic planning units should be supported by social science personnel. It was noted that, in addition to economic development, it was necessary to promote social development - an element often underestimated. In the latter connection, it was agreed that education, broadly interpreted, had a major role to play as a vehicle through which social integration could be promoted. The tendency to perceive education mainly in terms of manpower requirements sometimes had the effect of exacerbating problems of pluralism.

The Seminar felt that where social and economic deprivation and inequality coincided with particular patterns of cleavage the situation could be explosive. It was felt that much of the potential tension could be reduced by establishing within the social system basic levels of housing, health care, social security, wages, and "equitable" taxation, so that a reasonable standard of living could be experienced by all.

It was noted that, due to historical factors and the life styles of certain communities within a society, such communities were often in a position of disadvantage. In this connection the merits of compensatory action were examined. Participants preferred to see basic social amenities provided across the board rather than to attempt compensatory action, since compensation of itself could accentuate social divides. It was agreed, however, that in limited cases, and as a temporary device only, some carefully programmed compensatory measures might be introduced in the interest of social justice.

The Seminar noted the differential effects which certain kinds of development strategies could have on particular communities. As an example, it was pointed out that an export-oriented strategy could initially favour such groups as were more adept at an internationally accepted language. In another case, it was shown that certain kinship patterns prevalent among certain communities provided a better base for small-scale entrepreneurial efforts than where the family patterns were different.

The Seminar recognised that in many island communities tourism as an industry was likely to remain an earner of foreign exchange for some time to come. Where tourism was being developed, it was felt that every care should be taken to ensure that no particular communities within a society became identified with only one aspect of the industry.

In exploring the very difficult issues involved in relating the much needed economic development to the "mix" and to the problems inherent in pluralism, the Seminar agreed that it was essentially and foremost a matter of political will. If the over-riding objective was to develop a sense of oneness and to achieve a national identity, sometimes the most efficient economic development strategy might have to be sacrificed or delayed while a people was being forged.