

Recensions – Book Reviews

Tradition, Values, and Socio-Economic Development. (Ed) RALPH BRAIBANTI and JOSEPH J. SPENGLER. Durham, N.C. Duke University Press. Duke University Commonwealth-Studies Center. Publication Number 13. Third printing, 1965. 305 pp. \$6.00.

The United States “discovered” the so-called underdeveloped countries in 1949, when President Truman made an inaugural speech about them. In the past eighteen years an enormous amount of money, time and effort has been devoted to aiding the “underdeveloped nations” by the “advanced nations”. And from this experience has come a flood of literature at every level — case studies, theoretical formulations, essays on model building, blasts against waste and government folly, success stories. Much of the literature has suffered from the same fault as the aid programmes — it has attempted to assess the results of programmes and projects by using western standards. The aim of many development projects has been, implicitly at least, to make the people in traditional cultures “just like us”. The attempts to export the fruits and the philosophy of the Industrial Revolution (quantity, uniformity and cheapness), the Democratic Revolution (liberty, equality and fraternity) and the Welfare Revolution (equal shares for all) and to apply them in other cultures has often resulted in frustration as the forces of tradition impeded the best laid scheme of planners. If only the local people would save their money, instead of splurging it on weddings and festivals! If only the women would use birth control devices! If only the peasants could be persuaded to use an improved plough! This has been the burden of much of the literature on socio-economic development. Brought up in the world of the success story, of the triumph of man over all obstacles and over his environment, convinced that only material ends matter, most westerners (and this includes the Russians) have been baffled as they found the old ways persisting and reducing their best efforts to nought, like the tide washing over a child’s sand castle.

The general aim of socio-economic development programmes is to raise standards of living — at the national level (increasing the Gross National Product) and at the individual level (increasing the *per capita* income). Considerable gains have been made, but one message is coming out clearly in the literature and from the experience in the field. Traditional peoples are seeking a synthesis of old ways and new ways, rather than attempting to recreate the world and the ways of the west in their own countries.

Traditions and values are neither inimical nor favourable to socio-economic development. They just *are*, and can help or hinder socio-economic development, depending on the nature and scope of the programmes and the degree of understanding that the planners, administrators and others involved in the programme possess of the traditional culture. In the understanding of

traditional cultures, a knowledge of the value system of the local people is an essential prerequisite to action.

The book under review is an outstanding contribution to the literature on socio-economic development. It is scholarly (there are some five hundred footnotes in the text, citing as many as fourteen references), well written for the most part, and offers both theoretical formulations and empirical evidence on development. All the authors are leading authorities in their fields, and all demonstrate that imponderable thing called wisdom, without which no scholarship can be called meaningful. The nine essays cover the fields of anthropology, economics, history, political science and sociology. Five are theoretically oriented, and four deal with development problems in particular areas and cultures. The initial essay, by Joseph J. Spengler, discusses "Theory, Ideology, Non-economic Values and Politico-Economic Development". The quotation at the head of this chapter, from Francis Bacon, sets the tone for the paper. It reads:

"All perceptions, as well of the sense as of the mind, are according to the measure of the individual and not according to the measure of the universe. And the human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolours the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it"

Wilbert Moore writes on "The Social Framework of Economic Development" and Bert Hoselitz discusses "Tradition and Economic Growth". Both essays are written in clear, crisp prose; Moore's piece is well planned, while that of Hoselitz wanders all over the place, discussing development in India, France, Greece and Japan. Melville J. Herskovits, writing on "Economic Change and Cultural Dynamism" also tends to ramble. He criticizes ethnocentric economic models of development, and points out that the ecological setting in development is frequently overlooked. Ralph Braibanti writes on "The Relevance of Political Science to the Study of Underdeveloped Areas" and discusses six issues relating to the analysis of the political conditions of economic development. These issues concern the transfer of western ideas and institutions to developing nations. Braibanti notes "The lacuna in the discipline is the absence of systematic attention to the question of transfer of these ideas to Asian nations beyond the emotive assumptions which underlay notions of manifest destiny, Christian arrogance, and Anglo-saxon administrative superiority". Two papers by Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi discuss some trends in Islamic Political Thought and "Islamic Elements in the Political Thought of Pakistan". These two contributions provide a refreshing, non-western perspective on the problems of development that underlines what the other writers have to say about the ethnocentric assumptions underlying the discussions and activities in the field of socio-economic development.

John Montgomery's paper on "Political Dimensions of Foreign Aid" should prove an invaluable antidote against the naive idea that foreign aid consists

merely of giving away money. His realistic assessment of the foreign aid situation, based on wide experience, presents a number of possible ways to handle aid as well as recounting errors made by donor nations. In a final essay, Mason Wade compares the myths and realities of "Social Change in French Canada". It is not too long ago that the Quebec government tried to lure industry into the province by advertising in the American financial press, as one of Quebec's advantages, "cheap, docile labor". This is a fine, vigorous piece of writing and highly relevant to Canada's continuing debate on biculturalism.

This book packs an enormous amount of information into three hundred pages. Canada is moving slowly but surely into a deeper involvement in foreign aid programmes. She has no image as a colonial power to live down. But it is possible that she may create an image in the world as a well-meaning, but bumbling and fumbling nation if those involved in foreign aid programmes ignore the American experience in the developing world. This book should be required reading for all involved or interested in foreign aid programme and socio-economic development. At the theoretical and practical levels it has a great deal to offer. It does not make for light or easy reading. But a few hours spent reading these papers may well prevent catastrophic and expensive mistakes.

JIM LOTZ

Essays in Economic Anthropology. JUNE HELM, editor. Proceedings of the 1965 Annual Spring meetings, American Ethnological Society. University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1965, iii-139 pp. \$3.50.

This volume of eight essays is dedicated to the memory of Karl Polanyi, and the first essay, by George Dalton, is specifically a review and critique of his ideas and contributions. One of Polanyi's themes was that in precapitalist societies, economic institutions were generally "embedded in" or subordinate to social institutions. The notion of "Economic Man" is an invention of Western industrial society, valueless in understanding more primitive cultures because in them, economic goals and actions are inextricably intertwined with social goals and actions. The analysis of non-western societies in terms of classical economics ends, for the anthropologist, in frustration, and hence this tool is rejected as inadequate, by itself, for the job.

This theme, above all, is the unifying thread of the ensuing essays, and because of it the reader is left with the impression not of a random collection of papers but of a concerted attempt to clarify and develop economic anthropological theory. This is one of the strengths of this volume. However, an introduction or resumé, even if only a few hundred words, setting out more specifically the purpose of the volume and what the editors thought this collection of papers achieved, would have given these essays even more unity.

The essays are quite varied, using cultural examples from the subarctic to the humid tropics; some examine the economic institutions of specific societies,