

economy. We have all heard of the brain drain from the Third World, sparked partly by the opportunities discovered while training in donor countries — and if we have come to know one of the individuals involved, we probably have some insight into the powerful personal motivations at work and can understand how individual aspirations can clash with national needs.

And beyond all this lie such troubling questions as whether schooling, in our rather rigid sense, and education in its essence, are necessarily the same things, or whether they are sometimes in conflict. Contemporary critics, such as Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire, may be too sweeping in their attacks, but their scathing analysis has hit many nerves among educators and has revealed a great deal of futility and irrelevance in traditional approaches — particularly when we remember that there will never be enough wealth and resources to deliver our style of education to all the world's children.

Progress has  
been made

Nevertheless, it remains a basic truth that some progress has been won painfully over the past 30 years and that the people of the Third World have managed, despite cruel handicaps and countless failures, to raise the average standard of their lives to a higher level than before. The most convincing evidence is the fact that people there are living longer: diseases have been controlled to some extent, sanitation has been improved, infant mortality rates dropped by about 20 per cent in the 1960s and 1970s, and over-all life expectancy in the developing world increased in those two decades by as much as it did in the developed countries in a century. An important milestone on the road of world progress was reached recently when the World Health Organization declared that deadly smallpox had been eliminated from our world — because nations worked together intelligently to overcome one of the age-old enemies of life through a worldwide campaign.

I think it is of great importance for us to recognize the crucial role that education plays in all aspects of development. Whatever the twists of an individual's life, the people of the Third World know that all things considered, education offers their best hope for a decent job, even if it only allows them to compete for the limited amount of employment in their country's modern sector. We have learned, too, that education is essential beyond the modern sector, among the mass of the people as they try to meet their basic human needs — because people who understand writing and numbers are better able to learn new farming techniques, or new methods of sanitation and health care, so they can create a better life out of the resources that are actually available to them. One of the most effective ways to cut dangerous rates of population growth, in fact, is to teach women to read and write; when they learn that there are better ways to live, change becomes possible. Perhaps the real key to development is the transforming effect of education on the individual: illiteracy retards self-development, reduces the individual's contribution to the community, and makes a human being dependent and vulnerable to exploitation — but education *enables* the individual, unlocks hidden talents and capacity, and taps the potential for self-reliance. I want an education, said a Third World child questioned by a Western journalist, so I can stop being only the shadow of other people and become a real person myself.