

more difficulty reaching common positions on questions of substance and thus be forced into greater emphasis on rhetoric and procedure. It also risks becoming dangerously rigid in the positions it adopts at international meetings.

We can see some of these tendencies in comparing the histories of the recent UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) conferences. The UNCTAD IV Conference, held in Nairobi in 1976, is usually reckoned to have been a success. It was there that agreement was reached on the principle of an Integrated Commodities Program. The Group of 77 had prepared for that conference by holding its own meeting at Manila where it hammered out a consensus on principles and priorities. But the Group did not lose the flexibility to negotiate realistically at Nairobi: it clearly wanted an agreement on the commodities program and was prepared to make concessions to win it. And the developed countries, for their part, responded by making concessions which went beyond those they had anticipated.

The UNCTAD V Conference, held in Manila last year, had a more mixed record. Again, the Group of 77 had prepared beforehand, this time at Arusha. However, it did not settle on a clear priority, as it had for UNCTAD IV. And it adopted a position on the key question of interdependence which was highly politicized and from which it would not — or could not — budge. It refused to accept any reference to the role of energy in the economic situation of all countries. Even so, the conference did reach agreement on a number of issues, such as a program of assistance for the least developed countries, and on the principles of strengthening the technological capacity of developing countries because the 77 were still prepared to show some flexibility on these items.

The UNIDO III Conference, held early this year in New Delhi, is the starkest example of the dangers which can arise from the 77's adopting the wrong sort of negotiating position. In this case, they had followed an approach agreed at the Havana meeting of the non-aligned. It was confrontational, and it was highly politicized in introducing extraneous political issues and in couching technical issues in political terms. As a consequence, the conference failed to reach agreements which might have been possible on the key issues of substance. While many Third World countries showed a good deal of moderation in debate, the Group of 77 nevertheless maintained such a firm line in the negotiations that the OECD countries reacted by voting as a bloc, something which rarely happens.

It may be that the disappointments of the UNCTAD V and in particular the UNIDO III Conferences will lead the Group of 77 to modify its tactics during the forthcoming global negotiations. The recent UNCTAD agreements on the common fund, multimodal transport, and restrictive business practices are hopeful signs. I hope that these countries will be able to define a relatively finite set of priorities in relation to concrete issues and to display genuine flexibility in the negotiations. While the developed countries must be prepared to respond concretely to positive proposals and to make proposals of their own, the responsibility to make proposals falls particularly heavily on the 77. It is they who tend to take the lead in these conferences. They introduce most resolutions and largely set the tone. It is with this