

to which each meeting is focussed on a manageable number of issues, and to the determination of all sides to reach an agreement. Because of its importance, I should like to pause on this question of negotiating tactics.

The Group of 77's Approach to Negotiations

The Group of 77, now comprising some 117 countries or two-thirds of the U.N.'s membership, is made up of a collection of countries that are economically, culturally and ideologically very diverse. Because of this diversity --and especially the tensions between oil importing and oil exporting countries--some observers have been inclined to view the 77 as artificial and ultimately transitory. Personally, I think we are misleading ourselves if we believe the 77 as a negotiating unit will disappear from the North-South dialogue in the foreseeable future. The developing countries feel strong elements of commonality--arising from their traditional history as the poor countries of the world, whatever their present circumstances--and they believe that their collective unity is a requirement for successful bargaining with the North. What worries me is that as the tensions within the Group increase, it will have more and 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 and UNIDO 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 Programme. 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 programme 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