

Editor's note: *This issue of International Perspectives is given over entirely to a discussion of development or North-South issues. In presenting this material, we are diverging from our usual editorial policy in two ways. First, we are devoting an entire issue to one subject area rather than to a variety of topics in order to provide our readers with a body of opinion on North-South issues in advance of the major round of summitry that will focus on these questions later this year. Secondly, five of the articles are based on a series of lectures delivered in Ottawa late last year by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the former president of the OECD Development Centre and three leaders from Latin America, Africa and Asia. The lecture series was sponsored by the International Development Research Centre on the occasion of its tenth anniversary. Despite our normal editorial policy of avoiding "speech" material, we considered this unique presentation of views on the South deserved wider dissemination than it would otherwise receive. The limitations of space demanded considerable reduction of some of the material, but the message and analysis remain unchanged.*

The North-South dialogue

Global management required for new economic order

by Shridath S. Ramphal

The 1970s was a decade of false dawns and failed efforts — ten years littered with the wreckage of innumerable meetings and the debris of dashed hopes. What was needed most in a new and more dangerous era was a consensus on the nature, character and structure of global relationships and agreement on the bases of human survival as we approach the 21st century.

But the people of the world lost successively throughout the 1970s. Consensus eluded the efforts of the Sixth and Seventh Special Sessions of the United Nations, the CIEC, UNCTAD IV and V, UNCSTED, the Committee of the Whole in New York and, in a disturbing carry-over of the frustrations of the seventies into the eighties, the 11th Special Session of the General Assembly on development. The failure to achieve consensus at the Special Session was perhaps the most serious. The dialogue in New York did not become polarized between strident demand and mute response. It polarized instead between a much diluted claim for a global dialogue of change and an unyielding triadic refusal to even contemplate a sharing of power.

It is this issue of the sharing of power, management and responsibility that lies at the heart of the present stalemate. It is doubtful whether any good purpose would be served by glossing over the question or pretending that the dispute centred on other issues. We need not be surprised that power sharing or the relinquishing of privilege, should cause difficulty. It has

always done so in human history. To understand the selfishness and the contradictions of human nature is one thing; to acquiesce in their supremacy is quite another. 'Understanding' facilitates an approach that seeks not merely to condemn but to encourage those who seek to stem the tide of progress, to convince and to convert them to the cause of change, to show why it is futile to try to hold back the dawn, why its prospects should not frighten, why it could in fact usher in a better day even for those who held sway in the unreal light of night.

Governments and people everywhere, but especially in the rich industrial societies, must be convinced of the urgency of the need for change. The old postulates of power are no longer the primary elements of human existence. We have begun the transition from an era of dominance and dependency to one of interdependence; from a world governed by a small directorate of the strong to one whose future must be determined by negotiation and by consensus with the many who are weak; from a world in which sovereignty was a sword to one in which it must increasingly be used only as a shield. This transition must be made swiftly. As the old premises of global order fall away we court the

Mr. Ramphal has been Secretary-General of the Commonwealth since 1975. He is a former Foreign Minister and Minister of Justice of Guyana.