

"NEWS AND NOTES

SEMINAR ON SOCIAL WORK IN THE HIMALAYA

A Seminal on SOCIAL WORK IN THE HIMALAYA, held under the auspices of the Coordination Committee of Gandhian agencies for social work in border areas and administrators. The Seminar, which brought together scholars, social workers and administrators. The Seminar, which met for four days on 21-24 December 1967 in the premises of the Delhi School of Social Work, was inaugurated by the Vice-President of India, Dr. V. V. Giri, and was presided over by Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan. It was divided into two sections, (1) All Himalaya and (2) Units of the Himalaya. In all, twelve papers relating to different aspects of social work in the Himalaya were presented for consideration and discussion. The Seminar recommended the establishment of an institute of Himalayan studies and a central organization for social work in the Himalaya.

The session on the entire Himalaya from NEFA in the east to Ladakh in the west was opened by Mr. T. S. Negi of Himachal Pradesh, who submitted a paper on "Life and problems of the people of the Himalaya". The entire Himalayan region, he said, presents a feature of a rural society though the urbanization is increasing rapidly. It is essential to preserve the traditions and the customs of the people of the Himalaya. Polyandry, a social custom halloed by time, has an economic basis. It should not be interpreted in any way as a reflection on the character of the women who practise it. The status of women in

the polyandrous societies in the Himalaya is far superior to that of women in the non-polyandrous societies. Efforts should be made to abolish it slowly through education. About agriculture, he said that the whole Himalayan region is suitable for growing fruits and other cash crops.

One participant observed that more intensive cultivation of cash crops will gear up the economy of the region.

Dr. B. K. Roy Burman of the Office of the Registrar-General of India said that the Himalaya had immense hydel and mineral potential. He mentioned a number of physical constraints which face the people of the region such as (1) insecurity of life and land, (2) wide range of variation in the extent of rainfall and temperature and (3) uneven nature of the terrain making cultivable land scant and communication and the flow of commodities and services difficult and keeping the economy at a low level.

Mr. R. K. Patil of the Sarva Sangh pointed out that in the Himalaya, environment plays an important part in conditioning the life of the people. With the introduction of various developmental activities in the region, it was necessary to make a distinction between the developmental aspect and the administrative aspect. He said that the developmental aspect should be the concern of the social workers and non-official, voluntary agencies must be entrusted with this task.

Various views were expressed by the participants regarding the relationship

between official and voluntary agencies and the demarcation of spheres between them, and more especially the situation created by the presence of the military in the Himalaya border areas since the Chinese aggression of 1962, which often raises administrative problems. The needs of national defence and people's development does not suffer on account of the former.

At the end of the first session Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan said that he would like to make two observations, which were not quite relevant to the discussion but which he thought should be emphasized. The first was about the role of the state in the management of the affairs of society. His other observation was that inasmuch as social work aimed at social development he wished to emphasize that the administrative system as it obtained in India was not a fit instrument of development. Therefore, voluntary agencies had a very important role to play.

Professor S. C. Bose of the University of Gorakhpur suggested that it was necessary for every social worker to understand the factors controlling and/or influencing the location of villages in the Himalaya, e.g. land forms, availability of agricultural land, supply of drinking and irrigation water, position of roads and hill routes, religious centres and temples and location of passes.

Mr. Krishnamurti Gupta of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, said that the Coordination Committee of the Gandhian agencies for social work in the border areas had been able to inspire social workers from different parts of the country to go to the remote parts in the Himalaya.

Mr. Radhakrishna of the Sarva Seva Sangh raised some pointers as to the broad principles of social policy which could be formulated for this purpose as well as the formulation of policy which will rectify imbalances in the development work in the Himalaya.

Mr. Narayan Desai emphasized the importance of considering local situations before undertaking any programmes in the Eastern Himalaya.

Mr. Panalal Das Gupta stressed a separate type of approach of social work which was not common in the other parts of the country and said that the workers posted from the plains in the Eastern Himalaya should work there until the local personnel were developed.

Mr. Sunderlal Bahuguna of Uttarkhand said that there was a large scale migration of the youth in general and the intelligentsia in particular from the area to the plains. The result being that the Uttar Pradesh Himalaya known as Uttarkhand had to be the abode of the old and the women folks only. There was also the need to increase opportunities of employment in the area. Forest economy should be the basic economy of the hill areas of Uttar Pradesh. Industries and elementary education must be forest based. Sheep rearing and cottage industries need also to be developed.

The Seminar made the following unanimous recommendations on the basis of the papers submitted and discussions thereon:

1. An independent, autonomous institute of Himalayan studies should be set up immediately.
2. A foundation for social work in the Himalaya to help various voluntary agen-

cies in augmenting their financial resources should immediately be established.

3. A Basic Book for social workers in the Himalaya should be brought out.

4. All social work in the Himalaya must lead to indicate a great sense of social responsibility for the weaker section of the community.

5. The social worker should try to help the enrichment of the ethical content of the people amongst whom he works irrespective of the faith they may practise.

These recommendations, would receive attention and dispensation of both the Ministry of Education and the University Grants Commission.

NEW CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

A *new* International Centre for Advanced Study in the Developmental Sciences the first in the world—has been opened in the quiet English countryside not far from Oxford. Dr. J. A. Ambrose, a Senior Research Fellow of a famous London hospital with a particular interest in the psychology of infants, is the first Director.

Although man has acquired a remarkable degree of understanding both of his environment and of his own body, his understanding of how these influence his own development, how his behaviour is shaped for good or ill, still remains at an elementary level.

To help man gain this vital knowledge, an international Centre for the study of human behaviour and its development — the first of its kind in the world — is being established near Oxford in southern England.

The need for greater knowledge in this area is being felt increasingly all over the

world. It is now widely recognised that many of the human and social problems in the modern age are attributable, to a considerable extent, to failure or deviation in the development of individuals. From the earliest phases of growth onwards, developmental failure can give rise not only to abnormalities in individuals — mental illness, delinquency, organic handicap and so on — but also to many kinds of inadequate personality or intellectual functioning among so-called normal people.

CONCERTED RESEARCH NEED

Prevention of such failure and encouragement of optimal growth to maturity can be achieved effectively only if enlightened by scientific knowledge of how behaviour develops. But the growth of such knowledge is dependent upon concerted research in, and cross-fertilisation between, many sciences and disciplines.

The purpose of this new Centre for Advanced Study in the Developmental Sciences is precisely to promote this growth of knowledge by stimulating research into the factors which influence the development of human behaviour, and to extend the teaching and communication of information about the results of such research.

The scope of the Centre's interests include the biological, social and psychological principles that govern the development of human behaviour from conception onwards. Its activities will therefore extend to all those sciences and disciplines which are relevant to the growth of knowledge about these principles. These include anthropology, biology, criminology, education, embryology, genetics, neurophysiology, paediatrics, psychiatry, psychology, sociology and zoology.

It will be the policy of the Centre to foster thinking and research of any kind that shows promise of leading to new or extended knowledge in any area concerning the development of human behaviour. Consequently it does not cleave to any one limited viewpoint on theoretical or methodological issues. While wishing to encourage and help individuals engaged in specialised fields of research or teaching, the Centre's activities are primarily based upon a problem-centred, multi-disciplinary approach.

STIMULATING NEW IDEAS

The discovery and spreading of knowledge about the principles governing human development is the responsibility of scientists and teachers of many kinds in many countries. The Centre will help to stimulate new ideas and encourage communication between such people in all the relevant sciences and disciplines by enabling them to come together for study-groups, and also, when on sabbatical leave, to engage in private study, in research planning and in writing up their work. It will offer a number of Research Fellowships and will also promote the wider distribution of information about current research through its publications and by running short courses.

The Centre is controlled by the Developmental Sciences Trust, the chairman of the Board being Lord Adrian, O.M., F.R.S., Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. It is run by an Executive Council, the chairman of which is Dr. G. E. W. Wolstenholme, C.B.E., Director of the CIBA Foundation for the Promotion of International Co-operation in Medical and Chemical Research, London. The international character of the Centre is emphasised by the fact that the 20 members

of the Scientific Advisory Panel appointed so far come from the Federal Republic of West Germany, The Netherlands, Nigeria, United States of America, U.S.S.R. and Zambia as well as Britain, and any scientist or teacher who wishes to participate in the Centre's activities will be accepted from anywhere in the world.

The Centre will be completed and opened in Autumn 1969. A beautiful old country house in large grounds at Minster Lovell in the famous Cotswold hills of Oxfordshire has been bought and is being extended and converted for the purpose. It will provide full accommodation for up to 30 guests at any one time. Facilities will include a specialist library in Developmental Science, a film unit, conference room and seminar rooms.

RESIDENTIAL STUDY GROUP

Advanced residential study-groups will be organised at regular intervals, each devoted to a specific problem in the field of human development. As each study-group will be composed of some 15 invited people whose work is relevant to the problem, they will, essentially, form working groups', operating through the presentation of papers and discussion in depth. In most cases, the Centre will publish the proceedings to inform a wider public of new thinking and facts that will bear upon the welfare of children everywhere.

Accommodation and facilities will be provided at the Centre for people who want to further their work in any relevant area by individual study or writing, away from the responsibilities attaching to their usual place of work. Stays of this kind can be arranged for a few weeks or for several months — for vacation study or for sabbatical leave, for instance.

Short study courses to meet a variety of needs for continuing education will be organised by the Centre. There will consist of lectures and seminars, some designed to enable senior people to keep up-to-date with new findings or techniques in specific fields and others for postgraduate students wishing to widen their knowledge of Developmental Science.

The Centre also plans to award a small number of Research Fellowships to suitably qualified research investigators. They will be based at the Centre and able to use its facilities, but will be free to go away and collect data wherever it may be found — and, of course, they will be helped to locate suitable research material.

SPECIALIST LIBRARY

Designed particularly to serve the needs of research investigators and teachers, the Centre's specialist library will include not only the principal scientific journals, reference works and monographs on the Developmental Sciences but also pre-publication drafts, unpublished theses and reports as well as microfilm and cine-film material. Any material not actually stocked will be obtainable through reciprocal arrangements with other libraries. The Centre will also publish on its own account.

In addition to the proceedings of the study-groups which will be published in book form, a newsletter will be produced reporting on the Centre's activities! and also on important developments in research and teaching in the field of development in universities and elsewhere. A research monograph series is planned.

Although this first Centre for Advanced Study in the Developmental Sciences will not be ready to receive its first residents until late in 1969, the scientific programme

has already begun, with the collaboration of the CIBA Foundation in London.

The first study-group met in November 1967 when the subject for discussion was "the functions of stimulation in early post-natal development". The international character and diversity of disciplines represented can be demonstrated by the membership which represented five different countries and seven disciplines.

The second joint study-group took place in London in February 1968 when the subject discussed was "brain mechanisms of early behavioural development". The 15 specialists attending came from universities and institutes in Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Federal Republic of West Germany, Finland, The Netherlands, United States of America, apart from Britain. They came from Departments of Anatomy, Neurology, Paediatrics, Physiology, Psychiatry and Psychology. Seven papers were given in five days and over 15 hours were devoted to discussion.

WIDENING PERSPECTIVES

Both group-studies were acknowledged by all who attended them to have been extremely successful in clarifying problems, widening perspectives and stimulating new thinking about future research.

The third group of this academic year meets in May to discuss "mechanisms of language development". Three more study-groups are now being arranged for the next academic year. The proceedings of each will be available in book form within a year after each meeting.

This Centre is being launched in response to one of the greatest needs of man at the present time, namely, for much greater genuine knowledge about how the course of development over his life-span

is influenced by the multitude of factors that impinge upon him, whether these be genetic, social or environmental. Such knowledge is, in the long-run, a basic prerequisite for enabling the individual, his family and his society to choose courses of action that facilitate individual develop-

ment towards happy and effective living.

An initial grant of £200,000 has been made towards the launching of the Centre. Donations, bequests and grants totalling £500,000 are now being sought on an international basis.

R. Rahul*

* Mr Rahul, who is Head of the Department of Central Asian Studies at the Indian School of International Studies, was Secretary of the Seminar