THE CASE OF FIJI
DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL

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SUA
FIJI MEDICAL CENTRE
KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR FTUC/SPOCITO SOCIAL SUMMIT
The President, SPOCTU representative, and Executive of FTUC, participants in the Social Summit, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my privilege and pleasure to address you today on the very central issue of the aims and objectives of Social Development.

In March this year, the United Nations in conjunction with the government of Denmark organized the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) to promulgate a global consensus, hailed as a charter of hope by more than 90 Heads of States, to commit the nations of the world as well as multilateral organizations to resolving the critical problems created by five decades of development based largely on economistic preoccupations. Some 20,000 people participated in the official and NGO meetings that took place in Copenhagen.

In essence, the aims and objectives of Social Development are identical to many of the policy points that emerged in the Seminar on Alternatives to Structural Adjustment Policy held by FTUC in August last year. Social Development is primarily about improving the quality of life of the vast majority of people globally, in our region and in each nation. Workers and small farmers constitute the largest component of this majority. As very well illustrated in Fr Kevin Barr’s book, Poverty in Fiji, Social Development as a concept is very old. Ironically, its recent revival is due to the failure of those very economic policies that are currently being promoted as the best strategy for the development of all societies.
These policies are designed to cure the numerous problems created as a result of following economic development policies advocated by the World Bank, IMF, ADB, and national ruling classes. These entailed heavy external borrowing for large-scale, infrastructural (and often prestige) projects and resulted in greater productivity and more efficient use of resources has resulted in demands for the rolling-back of the state and its multitude of functions.

The first set of principles provides the thrust for prioritization: equality in the life chances of the broad masses of our societies. On the one hand, private capital and the market are perceived as the central organizing principles, and on the other hand the role of the State and development economics are dependent on preferential access to northern markets. It is very difficult to reconcile these two very contradictory approaches to human and social development paradigms. The UN agencies are on both the bank wagon of laissez-faire, free-market, free-for-all economic policies, as well as the social development paradigm.
massive indebtedness and consequent economic crisis. Yet, structural adjustment programmes have merely aggravated the economic crisis in these societies to the point where civil disobedience and riots are engendered.

My task this morning is not to detail the economic policies that have created the massive social problems now evident in the world, but to examine what Social Development seeks to achieve.

As conceived by the Social Summit, Social Development is concerned with the elimination of absolute poverty and the reduction of relative poverty, the expansion of productive employment and the achievement of social solidarity. These three very simple objectives are considered to be the essence of social development. In order to achieve these objectives, several strategies can be followed. Before I amplify these strategies there is a need to elaborate the objectives.

POVERTY

In the world today, in the midst of wealth there is degrading and grinding poverty which affects more than a billion people. While our region has been relatively free of the appalling poverty found in Latin America, Africa and Asia, absolute poverty is on the increase in the island states. Absolute poverty is life threatening with insufficient food and nutrition, clean water, and inadequacies in shelter, clothing, access to medical services, and to education. The poor are
In the Pacific generally, in 1977, those in the highest income bracket in Fiji
income inequality is very pronounced and is increasing, not only in Fiji but

poverty amongst the people and this contributes to relative as well as absolute
the lot of the not-so-well-to-do. In fact, what is produced is gross inequality in
generalizing employment and producing a "chickie-down" effect which will improve
have the wealth will plough their wealth into productive activities. Hereby
10-do government implement these policies to the fullest extent the already well-
including taxation policies, which are designed to further enrich the already well-
In Fiji as elsewhere, poverty is closely related to economic policies.
wives, and households in which the dependent ratio is either highest
heads, households dependent on the income of single-mothers or deserted
population live in poverty. This category includes households with unemployed
surviving on $5,000 or less were vulnerable to poverty. Some 30 percent of Fijis
of five or an earning of $3,000 or less was in absolute poverty, and those
than $5,000 a year. In 1991, the Poverty Task Force in Fiji accepted that a family
Programme noted that 70 percent of Fiji's labour force receive a wage of less
The Research Group and the PCG's Justice, Peace and Development
The Recent Economic Policy and Social Well-Being Seminar convened by
an advantage and a source of constant threat for the latter.
 marginalized and powerless. Their presence in close proximity to the rich is both
received twelve times the income of those in the lowest 20 percent of the population and 20 percent of the population received 53 percent of the national income. By 1986, 50 percent of the national income was going into the pockets of only 10 percent of the population. In real terms wages in Fiji on average are lower than they were in the mid-1970s. Indeed, UNDP assessed the real wage in Fiji in 1990 as being 62% of which it was in 1975. (UNDP Pacific HDR, 1994, 20). This is a shocking indictment of government's past economic policies. In Solomon Islands, UNDP estimates that 70 percent of the total income of Honiara households accrues to less than two percent of the capital's population (Ibid).

Social Development demands the implementation of effective measures to root out absolute poverty and to tackle the sense of relative deprivation faced by a clear majority of our people, particularly workers and small holders.

PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT EXPANSION

The rate of growth in employment has been slow reflecting a relatively stagnant economy. The advent of Tax Free Factories and Tax Free Zones to gear our economy towards export-orientation, has created new employment opportunities for a category of industrial workers who previously did not appear in our employment statistics in any significant numbers; namely women. By most accounts (excepting those of owners and managers of these factories), the working conditions as well as wages paid leave much to be desired. Indeed they are commonly considered highly exploitative.
Social integration denotes the extension of full rights to minorities and
colour of skin, hair type, nose shape, religion, language etc.

The world has moved away from systems that discriminate on the basis of a person's
post-Nazi era. With the recent collapse of South Africa's apartheid system, the
Segregationist and apartheid policies have not enjoyed widespread support in the
discrimination has been present particularly in the post-1997 period.

strengthening of stereotypes and prejudices. The ugly head of racism and
administration policies and practices contributed to the evolution and
of our citizens. Racial/ethnic compartmentalisation became of political-
Our colonial and post-colonial past has not contributed to social integration

SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

ters

interest in short-term labour exploitation under favourable free-market
produce sustained employment opportunities rather than encourage industries
with challenges who seek opportunities in the labour market. Such policies should
their livelihood, including the increasing numbers of women and other
people for the growing numbers who are or will be dependent on wages for
unemployment is a need to develop policies to increase employment
Youth unemployment as well as those who have suffered long term
With approximately 13,000 school leavers each year and a significant
other marginalised or excluded social groups who are usually left to fend for themselves or to be supported by traditional social support systems - namely, the poor, the unemployed, the disabled, women and children. Their inclusion as equals in the mainstream is a central goal of social development.

STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

In order to achieve the objectives of social development, several steps may be taken. First, an enabling environment must be created for social development because it is not separable from economic and political development. There is a need for sustained economic growth based on longer term strategies rather than 'fly-by-night, suit-case' manufacturers.

At the political level, good governance is a necessary condition for social development. This requires democratic, transparent and accountable government. The utilisation of government revenues must have as its central goal, the betterment of the quality of life of the masses, not the enrichment of the few.

Non-governmental organisations, particularly those of workers, farmers, women, youth, the elderly, the disabled and the poor, must be fostered and given due recognition. Such civil society groups are vital for democracy as well as for the empowerment of vulnerable (or potentially vulnerable) categories of people whose rights must be respected. Trade unions have been a bulwark for the
Fil needs to sort out its political framework. Without a stable political...

...ineffective cost of living. Underestimated trade liberalisation will be a disaster for the giants of Asia and their enormous pool of cheap labour and historically island states have long enjoyed. We are supposed to be able to compete with the preferential access to European Union and Australian markets that Pacific Island states enjoy. For instance, the current drive for global trade liberalisation will eliminate Island States.

Economic ideologies from the large, developed countries is not likely to benefit island states. There is a relative shortage of private entrepreneurs. Simply borrowing developing states must be maintained. Unlike metropolitan states, in the Island State, the role of the public sector in the economies of small Island is supported. While the current emphasis on private sector initiatives and employment generation, while the current emphasis on private sector initiatives is not acceptable, it social development is to be fostered.

...them. The use of the Law to disadvantage particular sections of the community is and adjudication, Law, lawmakers must be conscious of the responsibilities placed on them. There must be respect for the rule of law and the agencies that enforce rights. It’s protection of democracy and provide the framework for the protection of worker
environment private investment will not be forthcoming. It is especially important that the citizens of Fiji have confidence in their country. Regrettably, the loss of more than 60,000 Fiji citizens since 1987 has not stopped the haemorrhage of skilled and professional people together with their life savings.

An intelligence unit needs to be established in the Central Planning Office whose task would be to gather information on products that are likely to be successfully produced in small island states and which are in demand elsewhere. A well-funded Research and Development Centre must be established in conjunction with this intelligence unit which will be responsible for carrying out and coordinating research experiments in potential products.

Employment expansion requires that capital intensive activities be less of a priority than those that are labour intensive. Both our major foreign revenue earners, tourism and sugar are labour-intensive. They must be fostered. I disagree with Roman Grynberg's assertions with respect to the sugar industry.

More research, infrastructural and funding support are required for small-holder and village based farmers. Land tenure arrangements must give security to them. Cottage industries are another potential for labour absorption that requires close scrutiny and support.

The processing of our natural resources and farm produce can also provide opportunities for employment. We are a long way from fully utilising our
Poverty and unemployment. The rich will be able to sleep peacefully if poverty is
them and the state so that effective solutions can be found to the problems of
articulate their interests and concerns. This will further the dialogue between
All vulnerable groups in Fiji need to organise and be empowered to
are taken to eradicate poverty and reduce gross inequalities.
Internal security. There will be no need for a large military if effective measures
Commission felt that the role of the military will be increasingly concerned with
of the pacific is shocking. Little wonder that the so-called Defence Review
The Latin American proportion of inequality in Fiji and other island states

POVERTY ERADICATION

music and sports.

There is considerable scope for education and training in technical and

Preparation of our youth for employment and self-employment
system has not provided the necessary scope of skill development and the
a high attrition rate. The academic and examination-orientation of our educational
workers. While we can boast relatively high levels of school attendance, we have
Employment generation requires good education and training of our

Marine resources. There is enormous potential in this sector.
eradicated. We may not need to spend huge amounts of resources on securing our person and property.

Progressive taxation and the redistribution of wealth is necessary for poverty eradication. The provisions of social welfare and social security require urgent revamping with the deployment of both qualified personnel and more resources. NGOs working with the poor, including HART, require considerable support from both the state and the wider community.

Workers must be paid decent living wages so that they and their families do not fall into poverty. It must be remembered that unemployed youth, aged parents and those who are disabled are all cared for by families. It is time that the ministers of the state stopped paying lip service to the significance of the family in Fiji and put some money where their mouths are.

The right to collective bargaining by workers’ organisations must be respected and protected so that the interests of private profit are not advanced at the expense of workers. Free market economic policies are sadly premised on advantaging investors (employers of labour) at the expense of labour, which explains the so-called labour reforms which have accompanied economic deregulation in Fiji.

SOCIAL SOLIDARITY
CONCLUSION

democratic state.

enjoy all the privileges and take on all the responsibilities as citizens of a

intergrated. This requires that they be given the same rights and freedoms to

people from the mainstream be stopped and that all members of society be fully

Social Development requires that the trend to exclude elements of our

post-colonial status quo.

Constitution, the so-called Republican Constitution, has simply reinforced the
certain elements and discriminated against the majority of our people. The 1990
disabled. In Fiji there has been a history of racism that provided privilege for

commons, workers, women, ethnic minorities, the youth, the poor and the

effectively contributing to social wellbeing. Those excluded in this way include

societies which have for a very long time been excluded and marginalised from

and other small island states to show responsibility towards whole sections of our

There is an urgent need for those who wield power and authority in Fiji