

The quantitative description of income distribution (log-normal distribution) should not detract from understanding this important issue, along with social accounting and poverty determination.

The results of the model simulation is contained in Part III of the book, and seeing that any model should be tested against the empirical world, the inclusion of this section serves the purpose well. The main structure that could be levelled against the model, is its exclusion of a model of economic growth, explicitly including GDP which should reveal the effects of basic needs and demographic subsystems.

The advantage of the book is that it follows a quantitative approach whose mathematical clarity enhances understanding and possibilities of forecasting and performing sensitivity analysis.

In conclusion, the book makes interesting reading and is a must for all scientists with the development of the Third World at heart. One wishes a "structural adjustment" programme could see economic problems through the Van der Hoeven telescope.

Reviewed by K Mlambo and M Ncube, Department of Economics, University of Zimbabwe, Harare.

References

- ILO (1976) *Employment, Growth and Basic Needs: A World-Wide Problem*, Report of the Director-General, Geneva.
- ILO (1972) *Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Employment in Kenya*.
- Mkandawire T (1985) *The Informal Sector in the Labour Reserve Economies of Southern Africa*, ZIDS Working Paper No 1, Harare.

A Fate Worse Than Debt. A radical new analysis of the Third World debt crisis, Susan George, Pelican Original, Penguin Books, London, 1988 (290 pp, £4.50).

"Unlike most writings about debt this is fun to read". George says this about one of her own references, but it certainly also applies to her book. Connoisseurs of good rhetoric will like the book for its style and wit.

This book looks at the important international debt problem with erudition and even sometimes a premonitory tone. At the same time, there is a good dose of sarcasm, a modicum of the feminist touch and plenty of juicy anecdotes that add the needed pep and spice to this otherwise serious topic. Neat vignettes, or even many a surprise fact, are told with a fresh '*chutzpah*' making the book really enjoyable.

The script is packed and takes the reader step by step in unravelling the intricacies of the topic. The language is personal and adorned with colourful adjectives. I particularly enjoyed George's direct dialogue with the reader. The book needs to be savoured slowly, to better retain all the important information in it.

George is the queen of the fitting metaphors and one-liners in our trade. These are often humorous and related to a vast universal literature - from Churchill, "never before have so few been so wrong with such a devastating effect on so many" (referring to foreign debt), to Hemingway, "never send to know for whom the debt tolls; it tolls for thee". There are also references to the Prophet Mohammed, Hamlet, Hammurabi, Ricardo, Auden and Dante.

In the Introduction, George gives us an insight into the human dimensions and tribulations of writing a book like this one. The book is then divided into three parts - each preceded by a convenient one page overview - and a Philosophical Afterword. I found the author's major original input to the debt problem mostly in Parts II ("The People and the Planet") and III ("Now What"). In Part I ("The Players

and the Problem") the stage is set. We are exposed to a good many of the intricacies and details of a debt situation many of us may already be familiar with. A question I found unanswered though is, why does the World Bank make huge yearly profits on soft loans below the commercial rates when any other lending institution cannot make it lending below these rates?

Chapter 10 ("Debt and the Environment") shows us convincingly how environmental issues become totally marginal when governments face huge debts. As a result, a process of ecocide often follows, with absolutely no sense of solidarity with the future.

There is also a chapter, Chapter 13, on "The View from the South". One wonders if this is a coincidence or a bad omen. This chapter misses reviewing the Marxist viewpoint/s on the debt crisis, which I think would have been indispensable to show the full spectrum of approaches to the problem.

A challenging corollary to the book is the need to provide political and economic counselling (along the lines of that discussed and proposed in the book) to Third World countries and governments negotiating with the World Bank or the IMF. How to set up such an international consulting body (something that the World Food Assembly, to whom the book is dedicated, had proposed two years ago) still remains an untackled challenge to radicalised development professionals that agree with the book's theses. Also, in my opinion, the book softly endorses or is too condescending with the "human face antipoverty adjustment" movement which I think is delaying the more lasting structural changes needed to revert the further pauperisation of the poor in the world.

In the introduction to Chapter 14, the "3-D Solution" to the debt crisis, there is an excellent geopolitical overview of US policy towards debt that I thought was very enlightening. George also effectively introduces a new optic on the debt problem, namely that indebted countries have actually two major problems: to pay back and to obtain new money. She does not believe debt should be cancelled. Unconditional writeoffs would reward the Mobutus and Pinochets, penalising the more prudent countries and leaders, and would give the West a perfect excuse to cut-off all aid (see Moore Lappe, 1983), and would drop the credit worthiness of debtor countries to zero.

The author tells us that Third World social and political creativity, through grassroots movements, is the big unwritten story of this decade, and she gives numerous examples of this and places great hope on this encouraging development. The real centrepiece behind this development is that debt could be used to promote democracy and real development, if the cards are played right. No crisis, not even one of debt, is a crisis for everyone. The elite of debtor countries still profit from IMF adjustment programmes. The unemployment these programmes create also allows local employers to pay their workers less, especially when privatisation is part of the deal. Oppression and injustice, then, lie behind debt-induced poverty. The upper classes are sheltered from Fund-generated misery. In short, debtors are governed by people who benefit from the present arrangements.

Our author also introduces the concept of "Creative Reimbursement" in cash and in kind. The question is whether the applicability of this concept is utopic or realistic. It is also noted that what matters is not just the money that can be saved by not servicing the debt, but how and for what the money saved is used.

Other new concepts include "pre-1980 (discounted) commodity dollars", and a new "special currency" to be used to pay back foreign loans to the IMF and the World Bank. Although it may sound presumptuous, George also proposes a possible set of solutions to do with the flight of capital problem in the Third World.

The closing remarks to the book, before the Philosophical Afterword, have, surprisingly, no subtitle and the author again dialogues with the reader in a very personal style. The Philosophical Afterword which I had the privilege to read before publication of the book, through the courtesy of the author, was undoubtedly better than the one I now find in the book. Nevertheless, I still think this last portion of the

book is very fitting. It distils the intellectual message underlying our often indifferent behaviour towards the issues of underdevelopment. It is like the book's Alter Ego looking into issues such as scientific paradigms and their present relevance and limitations, the ideology of development theories and models, the politics and the power structures behind the more global issues in the real world, revolutionary and cosmetic changes towards real development, the futility of hammering on closed minds, and our accountability to the people who suffer. In short, it asks questions that cannot continue to be brushed aside if we are to be consequent and honest with ourselves. (see Schuftan, 1988). All these issues are very pertinent to development workers and need to be more widely discussed. It is thus fully appropriate that George closes this enlightened book with a resounding call to reject inertia and an ostrich's attitude when it comes to facing this international problem that affects us all and will bear on what our children will have to worry about in the 21st century.

Reviewed by Claudio Schuftan, IPS Project, Nairobi, Kenya.

References

- Moore Lappe F and Collins J (1983) *Aid as Obstacle*, Food First Books, San Francisco.
 Schuftan C (1988) "Multidisciplinary Paradigms and Ideology in Development Work", in *Scandinavian Journal of Development Alternatives*, June-September.

Pursuing Justice and Peace in South Africa, H W van der Merwe, Routledge, London, 1989 (127pp, £25 hbk).

In the opening page of this book, Van der Merwe states "Justice is achieved not by enforcing law and order, but by creating a just society whose members are assured of the opportunity to realise their human potential" and, again, "Justice and peace cannot be equated with the maintenance of the status quo in South Africa. Therefore the pursuit of justice and peace implies fundamental social change". He then proceeds to set out in great detail, most objectively and with great sympathy, the many different aspects of the causes of conflict in South Africa. The book examines, in detail, apartheid as a current ideological force, the causes of conflict, violence within the conflict, other manifestations of conflict, and the means which have been used, are being used, and may yet be used, in the handling or resolution of the conflict.

Most often the opinion one hears expressed is that the time for peaceful change in South Africa is long past. It is indeed true that a very high degree of violence already exists in the country, but the majority of the violence is still perpetrated by the agents of the system. It is refreshing therefore to read a book which expresses both faith and hope in the possibility of a negotiated and relatively peaceful end to 'the centuries old' South African problem. This faith and hope is fortunately based on the firm foundation of Van der Merwe's personal 'constructive engagement', and reflects, perhaps, opinions formulated after discussions with all the main actors in the drama, and, indeed, with many of those who take part only in the crowd scenes.

The author shows the changing emphasis of the conflict, from the ideology of separation to the current 'free enterprise versus socialism' thinking. In so doing he shows the part played by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), both in the promotion of apartheid at the start and its recent withdrawal from it. In October 1986 a resolution adopted at the DRC General Synod moved forward considerably. The relevant portion read "The conviction has gradually grown that a forced separation and division of peoples cannot be considered a Biblical imperative. The attempt to justify such an injunction as derived from the Bible must be recognised as an error and should be rejected". The author does not believe that this will automatically remove racial discrimination from the South African scene, but he does feel that