

## Poor Nations Make Another Attempt

Third world countries are making yet another effort to extract an agreement on international economic cooperation from the world's rich nations. Following the failure of UNCTAD V at Manila and the more recent setback for the developing world at UNIDO III in New Delhi the foreign ministers representing the "Group of 77" ended a meeting in New York in mid March this year with a call for a United Nations conference on global negotiations for international economic cooperation. Their specific objective this time is to work out an agreement with the industrial nations within a definite time-frame. The ministers were showing concern that negotiations with the developed nations were now in a stalemate in several areas such as trade and natural resources.

The UNCTAD Secretariat has also come in once again and through its Trade and Development Board hopes to draw up a strategy for submission to the special Session of the UN General Assembly in September. Late in March this year the Trade and Development Board adopted a resolution which indicated the growing mood of impatience among most of the developing countries. The resolution put to a vote "recommends that the special problems of the peoples and countries under colonial domination or foreign occupation should be explicitly recognized and integrated in the formulation of the new International Development Strategy" and also ("recommends that the United Nations system, including UNDP, should during the Third Development Decade mobilize adequate resources for providing assistance to National Liberation Movements recognized by regional intergovernmental organizations and to the peoples under colonial domination and foreign occupation") The vote was 62 for the resolution, which had been submitted on behalf of the Group of 77, 13 against, and 14 abstentions.

The Board (TDB) also requested the UNCTAD Secretary-General, in consultation with the Executive Director of UNIDO, to take the necessary steps to convene a meeting to consider further the related issues concerning the trade and

trade-related aspects of industrial collaboration arrangements. This resolution specifies that costs are to be covered from existing resources of the two organizations. The issue of "funds" appears to have become a sensitive issue among some of the western nations.

The UNIDO III conference in New Delhi was also deadlocked when a proposal for the creation of a new Global Fund for stabilising industrialisation of the developing countries failed to gain acceptance. A proposal for a global fund of US \$ 300 billion by the year 2000 to aid industrialisation of the Third World formed the central part of the Plan of Action document prepared by the Group of 77 and became the principal bone of contention between the two camps. It was unequivocally rejected by the developed countries. So strong was their opposition that they also rejected a watered-down, face saving formula of the Indian foreign minister, which substituted the US \$ 300 billion stipulation with the exhortation that "the total assistance channelled through the fund should reach a level of US \$ 15 billion per year as early as possible".

At New Delhi the developed nations also gave no quarter to make way for progress towards the target that 25 percent of the world's industrial output should come from the developed world by the year 2000. Rather, they seemed to question this very target which had been unanimously agreed to five years earlier in Lima, Peru. This target had in fact been diluted over time into a dubious programme of "generalised trade liberalisation" and relocation of bits and pieces of industrial production through the "redeployment of multinationals". But even this distorted version of the original Lima objective has not been pursued seriously either by the multinationals themselves or by the developed countries (as is seen, for example, in the protectionist measures taken by them in respect of textiles and made-up garments). Half way through the Delhi conference it became clear that the developing countries' delegates would have to return home empty handed.

Third World observers were unanimous in their view that there

was little leverage for the "have-nots"; while, the "rich" refused to see reason. It appeared as though the gap between rich and poor on the question of accelerated industrialisation of the Third World had grown during the conference. Writing in the Madras Hindu of February 16, the day after the sessions ended, Indian commentator Nitish Chakravarty succinctly summed up:

"In the cold emotionless world of pounds and dollars, there is little use for logic or rhetoric. The dramatic developments on the concluding day of UNIDO III, when the holding of the final plenary session had to be deferred over and over again, showed that the rich nations, especially the super powers, would not flinch from their fixed positions unless they were compelled to do so. But there was little leverage in the hands of the have-nots to make the rich see more reason. Hence it was idle to expect that a thaw would set in merely because India had taken the initiative and emerged as the nodal point of a compromise formula.

In fact it had become apparent quite early in the three-week long deliberations that UNIDO III was unlikely to fulfil the hopes it had aroused among the world's poorer nations. The formal statements that delegation after delegation placed before the plenary sessions left hardly any room for hope that a bridge could be built between the inflexibility of the industrialised nations and the expectations of the Third World aspiring for a share of the wealth now almost wholly monopolised by the rich".

Finally, "the 133 nation meeting adopted a "New Delhi Declaration and Plan of Action" presented by the Group of 77, with no likelihood of its implementation. It received support of 83 countries, while 22 voted against" was the complacent comment of the London *Financial Times* was "If this is what the Third World nations want they will get it most willingly from the rich, but if this is all such international gatherings would achieve the poor are going to soon see the pointlessness of hankering for an agreement on a New Economic Order".

The stark truth that "negotiations" initiated since the first oil price hikes in 1973 (the first major success of a North-South confrontation) and the adoption in 1974 of the charter on a New International Economic Order have been effectively fruitless is now becoming apparent to more developing nations.