

*Summary of the discussion after the
papers of L. Sabourin and J. Zubrzycki*

After the two presentations of Professors Louis Sabourin and Jerzy Zubrzycki the main thread of the discussion turned out to be the interplay between economic and cultural developments. Starting from the concept of development and from comments about what had been achieved in the world over the past five decades, it later concentrated on cultures and their relations both with economic growth and with each other.

Over the years the concept of development had evolved and been enlarged to the point where some people no longer wanted to use it. Its broad meaning was, however, thought to be significant. Moral development was obviously an important part of it, but was not always stressed in the development literature, neither had it been satisfactorily achieved. Some speakers stated that the development concept promoted by international organizations was too narrowly based on a unique model, inspired by the dominance of economic values in modern Western societies.

Whether actual evolutions taking place had also been over-dependent on economic priority was discussed. Some speakers definitely thought so. All recognized that the trend of the world economy toward globalization had changed conditions everywhere and created a complex network structure between societies. But it was also argued that not to have economic development was much worse than to have it; indeed it was perceived to be a problem that the economic aspirations of many countries could not be all satisfied in the future, which would create frustration.

It was also pointed out that economic development and the diffusion of a philosophy stressing economic values was the outcome of behaviour on the part of many actors and ought not to be imputed to economists alone. Except for the role of fundamentalist movements in some countries, there was little sign that such behaviour would change significantly, according to Professor Sabourin. The results of the resistance conveyed in Latin America by the philosophy fighting against "dependence" was described by one member as having been wholly damaging. The attention of the Academy was also drawn to the role of religions, perhaps even the Catholic religion, as inducing similar unfavorable resistance to economic progress. Finally the great economist Keynes was reported to have said that economists were not the guardians of civilization but of the possibility of civilization.

Some speakers argued that the globalization of the world had great cultural implications, particularly outside rich Western societies. In many parts of the world local cultures are invaded by the dominant culture, with frequent interference in moral values and community life. The need to maintain cultural identities was recognized and said to involve "subsidiarity". But one ought not to forget that different cultures exist within most countries and have to live together; separation of ethnic groups was neither always feasible nor desirable, since solidarities at different levels ought to be preserved. Neither should one make a mystique of cultural differences, because cultures were necessarily changing and at times for the better.