

"This pamphlet should be read by anyone considering giving their support to the Jubilee 2000 campaign to write off all loans to developing countries"

— Sir Alan Walters in the Foreword to this pamphlet

1999 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the inception of development aid. At the outset, the advocates of aid hoped that the expenditure of a few million dollars over a decade or so would lead to self-sustaining growth in the underdeveloped world.

Today, billions of dollars later, the need to continue development aid is taken for granted: the Jubilee 2000 campaign is merely the most recent example of the criticism that not enough aid is being given. But, as Lord Bauer and Cranley Onslow demonstrate, debt cancellation specifically favours the incompetent and dishonest. Thus it must be resisted.

What is needed is a radical revision of the way in which aid is allocated. Instead of being linked to per capita income, aid should only be given to those governments who pursue domestic and foreign policies likely to promote economic progress and the welfare of their people.

Clare Short MP, the Secretary of State for International Development, puts forward a vigorous defence of current Government policy – yet admits that many of Lord Bauer's arguments are both interesting and right.

Fifty Years of Failure

PETER BAUER & CRANLEY ONSLOW
WITH A REPLY BY CLARE SHORT MP





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These contributions to the debate on the effectiveness of Development Aid first appeared in the Spectator and are reprinted in honour of Lord Bauer's distinguished record in this field. The Centre for Policy Studies would like to thank The Spectator, Sunday Business and the Rt Hon Clare Short MP for generously granting permission to reprint these essays.

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FOREWORD

A version of this Foreword, written by Sir Alan Walters, formerly
Margaret Thatcher's Chief Economic Adviser,
first appeared in Sunday Business

LORD BAUER IS Britain's most distinguished scholar of economic development. For nearly half a century, in the face of the propaganda of the various aid lobbies, he has demonstrated that, in general, aid impedes economic progress. His work has been influential at the highest levels. When a left-wing minister, Clare Short, admits that she is not only "interested" in some of Bauer's arguments but actually "agrees with some of them", impartial observers may conclude that Bauer has won the intellectual debate.

But despite the strength of his arguments, it is clear from the support for the new Jubilee 2000 campaign that popular opinion has not yet accepted Lord Bauer's remorseless logic. So his position does need to be re-stated. This short pamphlet summarises some of Lord Bauer's essential conclusions and should be read by anyone considering giving their support to the campaign to write off all loans to developing countries.

I have had some first hand experience of the importance of Lord Bauer's analysis. Just after August 1982 when the Mexican debt default hit the headlines the leader of India, Mrs Indira Ghandi, paid a visit to Number Ten. Naturally the talk turned to the furore in international capital markets and the case of Mexico in particular. Margaret Thatcher, then prime minister, well briefed as always, congratulated Mrs Ghandi on the fact that India had very small external debts in the form of syndicated bank loans and would, unlike Mexico, continue to be creditworthy.

Mrs Ghandi agreed that India had been abstemious in its borrowings, but now she thought that the policy was mistaken. Earlier, she had been convinced that bank loans had to be repaid. Now she realised that syndicated bank loans did not need to be repaid. They could be restructured, re-negotiated, rolled-over, consolidated, or bailed out by Western democracies. Seventeen years, and five or six debt crises later, Indira Ghandi's conclusion can hardly be faulted.

Forgiving Debts

Reductions in the debt burden of developing countries is on the agenda of the G7 in the form of an initiative to reschedule the debts of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). This initiative mainly applies to debts owed to Western governments and international affiliates. Such loans are always concessional and involve substantial subsidies through below-market interest rates (with loans from the International Development Association (IDA), the interest rate is zero). Countries with large official debts, therefore, have already received and continue to receive large interest-rate subsidies. Much seems to want more – and that in the form of the HIPC initiative.

A developing country can qualify for HIPC debt relief only if its government has made substantial attempts to become creditworthy. With widespread economic mismanagement, particularly in Africa, it seems that only six countries will enjoy any HIPC debt relief by the end of 2000.

The reaction of the aid lobbies has been to condemn the HIPC initiative as being far too small and restrictive. Much wider and deeper debt relief is being vigorously promoted by the foundation of the Jubilee 2000 movement. This is a loose coalition of "every sector of society" including notably pop stars and less noticeable pop politicos. Tony Blair, it is said, has made "supportive statements" (whatever that means).

The target of Jubilee 2000 is not the rescheduling but the *cancellation* of the debt owed to donor governments and their international affiliates. About 50% of the total debt of poor countries

is owed directly to G7 governments, 40% multilaterally to the World Bank, IMF etc, and only about 10% is owed to private corporations. (The private sector steered reasonably clear of the basket cases.) Jubilee 2000 wants this 90% of "official" debt (approximately \$160 billion or £100 billion) to be written off. The movement claims that to cancel the debts owed directly to Britain would cost the British taxpayer £2 a year; (it does not mention our share of the cost of the cancellation of debts to the World Bank, IMF and other organisations which would add another £3 or so).

The Jubilee coalition wants to forgive completely the official debt of all countries it defines as poor and heavily indebted, or some unspecified combination of the two. Since it is an all-or-nothing proposal, there will be much altercation about drawing the boundary – who qualifies and who does not. If the GDP per capita were drawn at \$299 (in 1996 US\$, World Bank Atlas, 1998), then Nigeria would have her debts forgiven, Uganda would not.

Clearly this is so unjust that even the aid lobbies would find it difficult to stomach such inequity. Similarly how can one justify aid to be given simply to abolish debt? Country A may be very poor but has, like Mrs Ghandi, kept out of debt, perhaps even repaid its former indebtedness, by the most abstemious behaviour; country B, on the other hand, may have been enormously profligate and spent all its borrowed funds and is in deep debt. How can a large pay-out be justified to B (forgiveness) while A gets nothing? These are only a small sample of the questions which would occur to any reflective person.

I raise these questions since at present they are not mentioned in the Jubilee propaganda that I have seen. The proposals are, at most, half baked. They need to go back into the oven. Instead they have been paraded (literally) throughout many lands. Rock concerts and celebrities from pop, sports and Number Ten have constituted the most fabulous media blitz of the year. The Jubilee agenda has been presentationally brilliant. The emperor's shining new clothes are worthy of St Laurent or Versace. The trouble is that there is only a skeleton of an emperor.

Down the Drain

The Jubilee case differs little from the age-old arguments for aid from Western governments to the rulers of poor countries. Fundamentally, as Lord Bauer has demonstrated, it constitutes a flow of money from the poor taxpayers of Western countries to the rich rulers of poor countries. Aid fortifies the accounts of government and enables the rulers of poor countries to expropriate a sizeable fraction of their wealth and to retain power when, without aid, they may well have been ejected from their palaces to find refuge in their mansions on the Côte d'Azure. Aid underwrites government and so contributes to the politicisation of economic life – the retention of inefficient and corrupt state-owned enterprises, the repression of political opponents, and the radical distortion of all economic life through bureaucratic controls brutally and corruptly enforced.

The Jubilee process would, if fully implemented, add substantially to this politicisation. The coalition says that it wants to see "decisions about spending priorities... made in partnership with (the) people... and elected representatives of people's groups" with the diverted funds spent on healthcare and education. What a wonderful wish list! It is, however, naïve to suppose that the tyrants or dictators that rule these countries would engage in such philanthropy. The Jubilee movement could only be partially successful in its health-and-education aspirations if it completely changed the political complexion of these countries. Without such drastic reforms, the money would go where it always has gone: part into political pockets and part down the drain.

An Example and a Forecast

Fortunately (or perhaps not) we have a recent example of the process envisaged by the coalition. Last spring the international community made available a large tranche of aid to Russia. Now I believe that the countries in Africa have similar political characteristics to those of the Russian state – government by cliques, substantial corruption, extensive and erratic regulation and the abiding politicisation of economic life. So we have a fair

precedent. Well... The Russian billions disappeared in a matter of weeks without any trace (except to the Riviera) and certainly without any noticeable increment in the lot of the ever suffering people of Russia: indeed the prognosis is for a further fall in incomes and wealth. No doubt the Jubileers will counter this by claiming that they would require openness and transparency. Nothing like looking on the bright side.

This examination of the Jubilee 2000 proposals suggests to me that they will be resisted effectively by the donor governments. The G7 or G8 will point to the HIPC initiative as sensible and adequate and all that needs to be done. All that will remain of the Jubilee 2000 initiative will be the recordings of the popconcerts....well that's something.

Lord Bauer will have been vindicated once again.

Sir Alan Walters London

FIFTY YEARS OF FAILURE

A version of this essay first appeared in The Spectator on 5 September 1998

1999 MARKS THE fiftieth anniversary of the inception of development aid, which began with President Truman's Point Four programme of 1949. In those early days the advocates of aid suggested that the expenditure of a few hundred million dollars a year over a decade or two would give rise to "self sustaining growth" in the underdeveloped world. The elimination of world poverty (the title of the recent UK White Paper) was feasible and in sight. Thereafter aid would no longer be required.

Half a century and many billions of dollars later the need to continue development aid indefinitely is taken for granted. This attitude was evident among the G8 leaders at their meeting in Birmingham last year. Their overriding concern was with the question of cancellation of the debt of several Third World countries. And the churches' Jubilee 2000 campaign is for "a new start for the World's poor." In the changing aid scene, the only constant has been the well-orchestrated demand for more aid.

The failures and excesses of aid programmes are notorious. Of course there have been examples of gross incompetence, not to say corruption. But these are irrelevant or insignificant in comparison with other flaws in the system. The anomalies that have attended official aid include the subsidy to governments which have pursued such policies as brutally enforced collectivisation (Tanzania), promotion of mass sterilisation (India) and the persecution, eviction and even genocide of ethnic minorities in both Asia and Africa (of which Uganda provides one of the most conspicuous examples).

Western aid has also gone to governments explicitly hostile to the West, such as those in Ethiopia and Cuba, to governments at war with one another (India and Pakistan) and to regimes that have persecuted the most productive groups in their society.

Topical examples of countries that have derived little or no benefit from the aid they have received include Sudan, Mozambique, Angola and Rwanda, all of which have been ravaged by civil war, with the resulting break down in the economy leading to disease and famine.

Aid goes to rulers; it does not go to their subjects. Quite often these rulers are at war with large groups of their poorest countrymen. Examples include the Sinhalese-dominated government and its Tamil subjects and the Muslim Khartoum government and its Christian or animist population in the south.

Nevertheless the case for aid is still regarded as axiomatic. Parliamentary debates on the subject are hardly debates in the accepted sense of the term. They are more like conclaves of likeminded enthusiasts, and the criticism most frequently heard is that not enough aid is being given, and that more is better. The current obsession with debt cancellation is the most recent example of this attitude.

A fresh assessment of what has gone wrong and what might be done to put it right is in order. Debt cancellation, which of course is not new, is no solution. It is subject to all the objections to aid and exhibits anomalies of its own. Cancellation specifically favours the incompetent and dishonest over those willing to honour their obligations. It also undermines the credibility of Third World countries and makes it more difficult for them to raise capital.

These government-to-government hand-outs should be ended. This, however, is impracticable because of the powerful emotional, political and commercial interests behind this policy. The development aid lobby is probably the most effective and powerful in the world. It includes the aid departments in all Western countries, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international organisations. What could be done

to remove the worst anomalies and bring development aid somewhat closer to its declared objective?

To begin with, the criteria of allocation should be radically modified. Instead of being linked to the per capita incomes in the countries of the recipients, aid should be geared to the policies of their governments. It should be given only to governments whose domestic and external policies are most likely to promote the economic progress and general welfare of their peoples. That is, aid should be concentrated on countries where humane leadership, effective administration and personal freedom can foster economic advance. The current practice of focusing on per capita incomes as a criterion for giving aid represents a major anomaly itself. To give money to rulers on the basis of the poverty of their subjects rewards policies of impoverishment. If a government discourages women from seeking employment, or persecutes the most productive groups, it qualifies for more aid because incomes in that country are now lower.

The present trend for more multilateral aid needs to be reversed. Under bilateral aid there remains a vestige of control by the taxpayers of the donor countries to stop subsidies from going to governments pursuing inhuman and barbarous policies. Under multilateral aid they have no control whatever.

Aid should consist of straightforward grants rather than soft loans with long maturity and subsidised interest rates. These loans set up tensions between donors and recipients. Donors see them as gifts or subsidies, and the recipients feel them to be a burden. Much or most of the indebtedness of Third World countries is, in reality, the result of soft loans under aid agreements. The limiting case is that of the loans granted by the International Development Association, a World Bank affiliate. This gives out loans of 50 years' maturity at zero interest. The grant element is over 95%, but these loans nevertheless count as part of Third World indebtedness.

Radical revision of the criteria of allocation, replacement of multilateral by bilateral aid, and substitution of soft loans by grants could help to bring development aid closer to its declared

FIFTY YEARS OF FAILURE

objectives. But even these reforms are likely to be resisted by the immensely powerful aid establishment, since they would clarify the process and remove some of the mystique surrounding aid policy. However, they may be within the realm of practical politics, while termination is out of the question.

In these circumstances, protracted argument about the ways and means of debt cancellation will only serve the interests of national and international bureaucracies. What the world's poor need is limited government. Unless they have this there can be no hope of eradicating poverty.

NO, BETTER THAN THE PREVIOUS 500

This response by Rt Hon Clare Short MP first appeared in The Spectator of 5 September 1998°

PETER BAUER AND CRANLEY ONSLOW seek to mark the fiftieth anniversary of development aid by claiming falsely that it has failed, attributing some of the major wrongs that have occurred in developing countries to the effects of aid. They then switch their ground and call for a programme of reform not abolition – much of which is sensible.

The reality is that, despite all the misuse of aid that occurred during the Cold War years, more people have escaped from poverty in the past 50 years than in the previous 500. When we realise that the previous 500 years included the period when Europe and North America climbed out of mass poverty, it underlines what a big achievement this is.

Peter Bauer and Cranley Onslow should apologise for their criticism of President Truman. Truman's vision was right. Expenditure of small amounts of money has helped create a massive advance in the quality of life for millions of people. Just as the Americans were right to help Europe with Marshall Aid after the second world war, so we are right to help the developing world in the same way.

It is reasonable, of course, to ask: if aid is so successful, why are so many people so very poor? The simple answer is population growth. More have escaped from poverty than ever before, but even more have been born. World population was 2.3 billion in 1945, is 5.8 billion now, and will inevitably reach 10 billion. It

^{*} The author has been Secretary of State for International Development since May 1997.

could stabilise at under 11 billion if we spread education and basic health care, including reproductive health care, across the world. If not it will grow even further, with more violent conflict and large-scale refugee movements.

There are strong moral reasons for supporting aid and development, but they are complemented by hard-headed self-interest. The resources of the planet are finite. Growing population imposes great strains. The only way to stabilise population growth is basic education for all, including girls, and giving people the chance to control their fertility and see their children live and grow.

Wherever these conditions are put in place, population growth stabilises. It is also in our interest to avoid war and foster trade. Development assistance helps achieve all these aims and this brings big rewards for very little cost.

The suggestion that aid was responsible for Mrs Gandhi's enforced sterilisation policies, the emergence of Idi Amin, civil war in Mozambique, or genocide in Rwanda is simply false. But they are right to suggest that aid may well have been implicated in enforced collectivisation in Tanzania, and certainly Western donors provided massive aid to the corrupt dictatorship of Mr Mobutu for all the wrong, Cold War reasons. But the fact that some aid was badly spent does not mean all aid was, or that it always must be.

The joint authors refer dismissively to the international campaign calling for the reduction of the unpayable debt of the world's poorest countries. They tell us it is no solution. The G8, the IMF, World Bank and Christian Churches world-wide, disagree. There is international agreement that we should reduce the unpayable debts of the poorest countries to sustainable levels, provided they adopt beneficial economic policies. Again, this is morally right and hard-headed.

The debts are unpayable and prevent new governments who inherit bad debts from their predecessors being able to deliver reform, spend on health and education or attract inward investment. The commercial banks wrote off such debt long ago. The remaining problem is about IMF, World Bank and export credit debt.

Again we should examine our own history. German debt was written off after the second world war so that the European economy could recover. Germany was saddled with debt and reparations after the first world war and the consequences for Europe were highly destructive. Halfway through their argument Lord Bauer and Lord Onslow change tack. From exaggerated claims about the failure of aid, they move smartly into advocating a programme to reform aid. From here on, I became more interested in their arguments and agree with some of them.

Their first claim is that we should end government-to-government subventions. This is not right. Much government aid in the past has gone into projects – dams and roads, but also clinics and schools – which were unsustainable. When the donors departed, the projects ended. Now we seek to work to support reform that will strengthen government services permanently. We focus particularly on education, health and clean water, but also on financial management and tax-raising systems. And we help through our resource transfers to establish universal primary education systems. When our funding ends in ten or so years, there will be a self-sustaining, quality primary education system in place. When a generation of children has been through primary education, this produced a major development effect in all countries. Thus, sometimes, government-to-government work is better than projects.

I agree very much with the authors that we cannot allocate resources simply by need, regardless of the quality or values of the government. We need to back good governments and create models that succeed and therefore encourage people living under bad governments to demand change. Under bad governments we should try to strengthen voices for reform. We must, of course, provide humanitarian relief to those who are starving, but we should also be clear that while this is an essential act of human

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charity, it is not development. What we must do in these circumstances is to act to end the cause of the starvation, which is often continuing warfare. Otherwise, humanitarian aid can simply prop up war economies.

I do not agree with Lord Bauer and Lord Onslow that all aid should be bilateral. We need to strengthen the effectiveness of the IMF, the World Bank and UN agencies to manage our globalising world. We simply cannot work directly in every needy country. We should, however, make our input into international agencies conditional on increased effectiveness – and this we are doing.

We are living at a time when a great advance in human development and poverty reduction is possible. Countries across the world have voted to work together to meet a range of targets, including halving the proportion of people living in abject poverty by 2015 and providing universal primary education and basic health care by that date. The OECD Development Committee spelled out its commitment to these aims in its 1996 report Shaping the Twenty First Century. The G8 reaffirmed their commitment to the targets at the Birmingham Summit. All the experts agree that these targets are affordable and achievable. To make progress, we must focus both our bilateral and multilateral systems on these targets, and we must back up the efforts of developing country governments committed to the targets.

Britain spends £20 billion on defence, £100 billion on social security and £2 billion rising to £3 billion on international development. This is a small expenditure for a massive objective – eliminating abject poverty from the world and leaving a sustainable planet to the next generation. This aim is both noble and essential to our national interest.

A REPLY TO CLARE SHORT

This response by Lord Bauer was first published as a letter in The Spectator of 12 September 1998

I WISH TO COMPLIMENT the Secretary of State for her skilful defence of an impossible position, the most effective I have read. In a short response, I can address only two of the Secretary of State's many arguments to protect developmental assistance by obscuring realities. She refers to Marshall Aid as an example of successful developmental aid. This is misleading. The economies of Western Europe had to be restored, not developed. The peoples of Western Europe had the motivations and institutions required for economic progress as was evident from their pre-war economic conditions. This explains why Marshall Aid could be wound up after four or five years, during which West Germany had to absorb millions of refugees, among whom old people and children were disproportionately represented. Contrast this with development aid, the continuation of which, after 50 years, is taken for granted.

Miss Short's references to population reflect the widely held opinion that people are, primarily, a burden, a liability rather than an asset. But with every mouth God sends a pair of hands. People are a resource. To quote the late Julian Simon, human intelligence is the ultimate resource.

Finally, Cranley Onslow and I did not suggest that development aid 'was responsible for Mrs Gandhi's enforced sterilisation policies', the emergence of Idi Amin, civil war in Mozambique or genocide in Rwanda. What we did write was that government-to-government subsidies went to those rulers while they pursued cruel, barbarous policies.

AID ABSURDITIES

This contribution by Anthony Daniels was first published as a letter in The Spectator of 19 September 1998

CLARE SHORT MISSES THE POINT of Peter Bauer's and Cranley Onslow's article, which is that foreign aid bolsters the power of governments vis-à-vis their populations. It is hard to see, in the conditions prevailing in the Third World, particularly in Africa, how it could be otherwise. Since these governments are almost always responsible for economic and social policies which prevent development in the first place, aid is not merely self-defeating but positively harmful.

What is a small sum for the donor countries may be a large one for the recipient country, especially in relation to foreign exchange earnings. The smallness of the sums we spend on aid in relation to our defence budget is therefore irrelevant. I saw for myself in rural Tanzania the arbitrary power which access to foreign aid workers, their goods and their money conferred on members of the oppressive and economically inefficient bureaucracy – which could generally be measured by its girth alone. The power of the aid workers was likewise considerable: a bottle of whisky could buy a man's arrest and imprisonment.

The absurdities of aid are legion and ineradicable. In Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea, whose first president killed or drove into exile a third of the population and kept the national treasury under his bed until he was executed by his nephew, the present president, I counted vehicles of 27 aid agencies in two hours. The principal preoccupations of the government at that time, apart from the purchase of real estate in Marbella, was the construction of a new airport road and a score of luxury villas for

the forthcoming meeting of local heads of state. Twenty-seven aid agencies failed to result in economic development: were fifty-four therefore needed?

In Somalia I witnessed the UN High Commission for Refugee's refusal to work because the government insisted that its staff exchange money at the official rate, thus allowing the government to appropriate half the value of the money for its own nefarious ends, while the staff demanded to be allowed to exchange money on the illegal open market. There was a cholera epidemic at the time.

A hundred anecdotes pointing to the same conclusion are more than merely anecdotal.

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Peter Bauer

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...an excellent pamphlet - Stephen Glover, The Spectator

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