# SECTION H—CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

## The Study of Social Change

PROFESSOR ERNEST BEAGLEHOLE,
Victoria University College, Wellington

I.

THE United Nations programme of technical assistance to underdeveloped nations and the Colombo plan programmes have now been in operation for some three years. The Point-4 programme of the United States Department of State has been functioning for a somewhat longer period The international programmes of the specialised agencies, where these have been financed from ordinary budgets, have been in operation for several years longer. Practically all these action-programmes have been originally conceived in terms of a technical assistance that has had as its aims the improvement of the material welfare of underdeveloped countries through increasing agricultural and livestock production, through attacks on disease, attacks on illiteracy, and through improvements in operation of the economic institutions of a country (banking, credit, exchange). Agriculturists, live stock experts, experts in malaria, economists, farm extension workers, irrigation technicians, fisheries experts, sanitation engineers, experts in arts and crafts, have visited countries in all parts of the world, have drawn up excellent technical plans, have exhorted, persuaded, cajoled, threatened, advised, experimented, constructed. Some have returned to their own country, frustrated. Others have remained to carry on work in the recipient country, often also "browned-off". Still others have begun to wonder what all this business of social change is about, why in effect people who apparently ask for technical help and, equally apparently, genuinely desire such help, have difficulty in doing the things that the experts believe will bring desirable changes.

Or, conversely, technical experts may be at first gratified to find that dependent peoples accept eagerly new technical methods, only to be distressed later on when it is apparent that a "chain reaction" has started in which many things are changed which the experts did not want to change, and perhaps, by changing, nullify the initial beneficial charge. In other words, technical experts (and by this term I mean all experts in doing, or changing animals or plants or things or institutions or administrative procedures) are slowly realising that back of the animals or "things" are human beings organised in complex social networks and that it is these human beings who give meaning to the "things" and who therefore must change (and by changing, change also the social network which enfolds them) before the best use of new resources can be permanently achieved. The publication of studies by Hoselitz, Spicer and Unesco are reflections of these problems. Further studies by the Provisional Social Science Council, now under way, with a view to a critical survey of techniques of evaluation are additional evidence of the dilemma in which technical experts now find themselves.

It would seem therefore that the social sciences—or some of them at least—are being faced with the challenge: how can programmes of technical assistance


Vol 82, Part 4 (Eighth Science Congress Report), pp. 927–936, February, 1955.

be made more effective? How can the administrators of these programmes gauge the effectiveness of what is being achieved by the field expert? How can the field expert learn about the effectiveness of his own activities?

At first glance it might be assumed that there was no real problem. Statistics on corn production show the value of new hybrid stocks. Statistics on the importation of fencing wire show whether new methods of live stock pasturage are being developed. Statistics on capital investment show how new industries are being planned and developed. So far so good. What the statistics cannot show, however, is the associated changes, and the tensions involved in these changes, that are necessary if new methods of live stock control are to take a firm and lasting hold—or, another example, how for a change in motivation and incentives is being built up to support industrialisation. And, secondly, it is when statistics do not show what they might reasonably be expected to show that there is evidence of blockage and frustration. In either case, we are back at the human problem in its social setting and therefore back to the social scientist and the need for evaluation.

Phrased in a somewhat different terminology, we are back to the problem that the anthropologist has been concerned with for forty-odd years—the problem of culture contact—and the social psychologist for about a third of this time—the psychology of social change. The educationist has also wrestled perennially with this problem in trying to decide the function of education in a changing society, the sociologist has been interested in problems of accommodation and assimilation

Is it possible as yet to lay out some of the problems of social change and resistance to social change so that methods of evaluation may ultimately be refined?

In the first instance, I do not know how far it is necessary to discuss the ends and values of social change *per se*. Nor, perhaps, do I know enough social philosophy to speak with intelligence about this subject. It is a complicated subject in any case. On the one hand, there is the naive and somewhat uncritical enthusiasm of some experts for the job in hand so that they are not prepared to stop and consider where the changes they initiate are going to take an underdeveloped people. Does economic and social development of underdeveloped areas mean the development of present capitalism everywhere and the gradual submergence of the values of a folk culture? Is it the fate of every non-literate society to move along the folk-urban continuum, and will this happen inevitably and inexorably?

From the other side, underdeveloped peoples often show a marked desire for some kinds of new gadgets (tractors, for instance) or a marked aversion to malaria or a desire for higher standards of housing. Yet it may be difficult to satisfy these new needs and desires or to awaken other dormant desires without at the same time producing personal and social disorganisation. How far, then, should the technical expert be a party to this disorganisation—or, conversely, can the social scientist patch up and reconstruct after the disorganisation has taken place Even if he can, what social model should the social scientist follow in designing his social reconstruction? Freedom from pain seems to be desired for the most part by most people. But is competition ethically better than co-operation or is a certain amount of mental disease a small price to pay for one's ability (or someone else's ability) to enjoy

Beethoven or Picasso? The fact that we cannot answer these questions does not show their lack of importance. It does indicate that the social scientist cannot avoid completely a consideration of social values. They hover like an unexorcised ghost over all his practical work.

However, social change will go on whether the social scientist can answer questions of value or not. Underdeveloped peoples are caught up in a modern world in which change is almost a god. The social scientist, therefore, from the practical viewpoint, must assume that freedom from pain and disease, freedom from want, are desirable goals, and that to make these goals available to the greatest number of people, and not merely to an élite, in an underdeveloped country is sufficient justification for his concern with practical problems.

## II.

Returning now to the cultural dynamics of social change, the first point to note is the fact that cultures as a whole display a differential reaction to social change itself. Kroeber, for instance, has reminded us of the existence of labile social structures—among primitives, of impermanence and instabilities in social structure, among lettered peoples, in political forms. Among those groups in which this "play-derived, though unconscious activity of culture" operates we may expect, other things being equal, a hospitality to social change which would be unlikely in other more conservative and in-drawn cultures. Again, Kroeber would consider that cultures can suffer from "cultural fatigue"—a kind of social staleness and disillusion which results in widespread social exasperation. As Kroeber remarks, "Once an attitude of the kind develops sufficient strength, novelty as such may come to seem a virtue and a boon."

Finally, we may note an aspect of cultural change which Kroeber discusses in terms of affective anchoring, but which has been rephrased and reformulated lately in the terms of relative congruence of values between two cultures in contact. According to Kroeber, certain customs in a culture become loaded with emotion—stepdaughter marriage and disposal of dead bodies are his two examples. If emotionally weighted customs are in addition part of larger organised systems of ideas and sentiments, then the affect becomes a factor making for stability and resistance to change. If, on the other hand, the custom is only loosely connected, then it may change, but since the free-floating emotion endures and looks for attachment, the change will be one of substitution. Thus in either case, affect operates as a stabilizing, conservative force (though Krober would not agree that substitution is eventually conservatism).

In the newer reformulation, it becomes more appropriate to assume that not customs or traits alone are invested with emotion, but that whole areas or aspects of a given culture are permeated with positive valences. These valences express the system of value-judgments of a culture. At the personal level they are part of the basic personality structure of typical individuals in the culture. At the cultural level they represent one of the unique ways in which a given culture combines its customs or traits into a meaningful whole. Where there is a greater rather than a less amount of congruence between the value systems of two cultures in contact there is a greater chance that one culture (subordinate through the operation of various other factors) will

borrow from the superior culture and work over the borrowings into its own unique pattern. In this particular contact situation, this particular subordinate culture will be socially labile and thus change with a minimum amount of personal or social stress. Recent work in Micronesia, for instance, appears to suggest that congruence between the values of Palauan society and those of American society is one good reason why Palau is readily adjusting to new introduced forms of social and economic organisation. Where this congruence does not exist (for instance among many Pueblo peoples in the American South-west) social change does not take place so quickly.

One immediate conclusion therefore is this: evaluation of social change and its probable speed must depend upon the social scientists' prior knowledge of the relative lability of the receiving culture, the value system of this culture and the relationship between these two variables and the pressures and values of the giving culture.

It is by now a fairly well established fact that social change is most likely to be initiated when there are disaffected persons in the receiving culture who are likely to gain material, social or spiritual advantage through a new social order to be brought about by changed social statuses. Similarly, the followers are likely to be those whose status position in the "primitive" culture is most precarious. "Disaffected" is a wide category and obviously includes all those who for one reason or another are misfits, know it, and hope for improved adjustment: the losers in war, the losers in a status struggle, the ego-defeated in religion, politics, economics or family affairs. Another approach to the evaluation of social change therefore is prior knowledge of the number, status and kind of adult misfits in the recipient culture, and the kinds of tension which their presence in the receiving culture is generating at the time new ways of life are presented to the people concerned. Temporary or permanent leaders are likely to come from the misfits—though the misfits are not necessarily found among the economic "have-nots" in a given society.

The speed at which change, once initiated, is likely to continue, must depend, among other variables, upon the speed at which individual personality organisation can also change in order to support the new social organisation and institutions generated by the process of change. The relation between personality and culture is complex. Culture helps to build the personality structure, which in turn supports or changes the culture. A changing culture will have effects on personality more difficult to analyse or predict than a stable culture, though much depends upon whether culture changes are static (or peripheral) or dynamic (or core-influencing). Study of some examples of culture change (for instance in the Cook Islands, among the Iroquois and among the Salteaux) appears to suggest that culture change may progress considerably without altering basic personality structure. In those instances it is probable that personality "lag" or inertia acts as a resistance to the speed of social change, slowing it down or skewing it in directions which harmonise with the personality lag, or, at least, cause the least amount of intra-psychic tension. This hypothesis would offer an explanation for both the backward-looking world-view of the Dakota Sioux, the apparent inability of some Maori groups to succeed in dairy farming, or the resistance to some types of social change among the Iroquois and the Salteaux.

The conclusion arrived at therefore, in connection with the problem of evaluation, is that personality tests, including projective tests, may very well

be used to study personality structure among a people undergoing social change; and that the results of such testing need to be considered in evaluating the probable results of induced social change.

One important aspect of the personality structure is the organisation of motives, the types of incentives to which a person has learned to respond, and the sorts of authority that he finds most congenial. Incentives and authority relationships are part of the cultural matrix. Motives are the personality correspondences to the cultural patterns or, better, personality variations on a theme set by culture. One of the problems of social change, particularly of change in the technological organisation of a society, is to develop in persons the type of motivational structure that will allow a new technology to operate to its optimum extent. Attitudes to time are important here, attitudes to continuous, uninterrupted, segmental work, attitudes to fine finger-dexterity work as compared with hard muscle-slogging work, attitudes to routine as compared with individually determined quantity and tempo of work. Equally basic is the incentive that is offered for making a new adjustment in the attitude system, and what becomes of the monetary or other reward once it is earned.

As something of an aside, it might be well to note here that German and Russian industrialists in the nineteenth century, according to Gerschenkron, were in the habit of inveighing against the inability of their workers to adjust to the developing industrial system, comparing these unreliable workers, much to their disadvantage, with the reliable industrious English worker. Evidently even in Europe it took time to turn a peasant into a factory hand. The work habits of the modern European workers are thus not a God-given inborn superiority of the European over his African or Mexican fellow-worker.

The only methods we can use to measure socio-technical change are simple records of output, absenteeism, labour turnover and the like. It may be well to keep in mind, however, the fact noted by Moore that it is the least acculturated Mexican Indians who flock into factory work, and who therefore adjust to it more easily than more acculturated Indians. The reason why is not clear, theoretically or practically. It is possible that the "primitive" value-systems of some Indian groups are more compatible with the value-systems implicit in technology than those Indian value-systems already disintegrating under other types of social change pressure Or perhaps other variables are operating to make technological adjustment easier: for instance, workers and their families migrating to a centre of industry where they join a social group already in existence and composed of workers and their families from the same village or tribe—this is one inference to be drawn from Lewis's study of the city adjustment of Tepotzlan workers, and again from the fact that Peruvian Highland Indians work well seasonally in the lowland industries, plantations and factories if there are already existing social clubs composed of men from their own village or neighbourhood, to which they can belong and where they can find some acceptable social satisfactions

New authority relationships brought about by social change may or may not be congenial to the implicit preferred authority pattern of the peasant worker. Where it is not so suited, personal adjustment will be achieved only slowly and institutional change subject to many frictions. Father Charles' study of the Bantu conception of a contractual obligation and of his tendency to respond to his European employer as if he were his tribal chief is illuminat-

ing. So long as both Bantu and European are unaware of the fact that their respective conceptions of the labour situation, and consequently their perception of worker and boss, are totally different, indeed contradictory, then industrial friction is inevitable, employer frustration probable and workers' feeling of injustice an ever-present factor in industrial unrest.

The social scientist therefore can help to evaluate the role of implicit authority relationships and their effects on social change. In New Zealand we might begin with a study of what authority in family and tribe means to the Maori, how authority relationships are perceived, and how far these relationships coincide or are at variance with a European foreman or employer's implicit conception of this relationship for both his European and his Maori workers. Perhaps the study should be extended to include the authority relations of the trade-union secretary and the manner in which these relations mesh or grind in the gears of an industrial system.

## III.

Evaluation of social change implies some baseline upon which the change itself can be predicated. In theoretical studies of culture contact it seems reasonable to use the culture as it was at the time of initial contact with the invading culture, and as it can be reconstructed from eye-witness accounts, historical records and aged informants as the zero-line from which change is to be studied. The social scientist, to-day studying a rapidly changing social scene or working with a team of technical experts, can rarely enjoy the luxury of historical reconstruction with all the checks and clues that it may offer. The social scientist must think of change projected into the future—if he is not so lucky, he must also consider administrators waiting for his next report. Hence he must establish contemporary base lines from which future bench marks can be sited and gradients of social change laid out. Some of the theoretical and practical problems involved in these baselines and gradients are to be discussed in another paper to be given at this Congress All that requires consideration at this point because of its wider implications for psychology, education and perhaps social philosophy, is the hypothesis that extent and speed of social change among non-literates can be measured by reference to statistics on crime and mental disorder. Studies in the United States make it pretty evident that assimilation of immigrant Europeans into the dominant culture of contemporary American life results in peoples of migrant stock gradually achieving indices for mental disease, delinquency and crime which differ little, if at all, from those characterising peoples of the dominant culture. Similar indices thus become the badge of being insiders and not outsiders. Mental disease, for example, becomes a sign of the difficulty that members of a society have in adjusting to social norms. It is also a sign of the difficulty members of an outside group have in adjusting to a changing culture which is in the process of being incorporated into a larger cultural whole.

One end result of social change may be assimilation. Another end result however may be represented by a process of integration. Instead of absorption and incorporation, there is developed a new culture in which there are largely autonomous sub-cultures, each participating fully in the economic and political life of the new culture, but each preserving a certain measure of cultural independence in other aspects of life. It seems important to evaluate the result

of a process of cultural change for the reason that indices of personal and social disorganisation may be symptomatic of assimilation, but not of social integration—or at least the symptoms may be less pronounced where the process seems to be directed more towards integration and less towards assimilation.

An interesting case in point is that of Lewis's study of the adjustment of individuals and families from the village of Tepoztlan who have gone to live in Mexico City. Studies of rural-urban migration in the United States almost uniformly present findings in which migrants to large cities are found to suffer from personal maladjustment, breakdown of family life, decline of religion and increase of delinquency: the inevitable consequence of a change from primary group environment with all its personal, moral and intimate warmth to a secondary group environment which by comparison is cold, unfriendly, impersonal. Lewis has been able to study intimately the lives of about 90 per cent. of these Tepoztecans who have migrated to Mexico City. He finds that Mexican peasants adapt to city life with far greater ease than do American farm families. "There is little evidence of disorganisation and breakdown, of culture conflict, or of irreconcilable differences between generations. . . . Family life remains strong in Mexico City. Family cohesiveness and extended family ties increase in the city, fewer cases of separation and divorce occur, no cases of abandoned mothers and children." Lewis adds that standards of living rise in the city, religious life becomes more Catholic and disciplined, there is a greater reliance upon doctors and patent medicines to cure sickness and, finally, village ties remain strong.

It is unnecessary to discuss all the possible explanations that might account for these Mexico City findings. What they do suggest most clearly is that we need to re-think our hypotheses about the influence of increasing social change, notably the process of urbanisation upon the personal and social life of those settling in large cities. Perhaps our findings to date are themselves "culture-bound" by the experiences of North American cities. In any case, study of the Tepoztecans in Mexico City is likely to lead us back again to the role of value-systems in mediating, either positively or negatively, social change. It will also lead us to a more detailed study of the process of becoming urbanised and to the hypothesis that where this process is one of integration and not assimilation the hazards to personal and social life are correspondingly less.

It is to be hoped that in due course we shall be able to study more intensively the process of urban adjustment among the Maori, particularly by analysing at the social and psychological level a rural Maori community and then following up this study by a corresponding study of Maoris from this community who have gone to live in one of our larger cities.

One possible clue to Maori adjustment may come from a more exact and intensive study of Maori crime and Maori mental disease. The incidence of crime and mental disease is partly determined by the age-composition of a population. Mr. John McCreary, of the School of Social Science, Victoria University College, has made a special study of some aspects of Maori personal disorganisation from this point of view. His conclusions may be summarised very briefly as follows: In regard to mental hospital inmates it is evident that the Maoris are "entitled" to a figure of 31·27 per 10,000 of the Maori mean

population, whereas their actual figure (their real rate) is 20·61 per 10,000. For comparison, the Pakeha real rate is 47·74 as against their entitlement figure of 47 31. The conclusion therefore is that Maori mental disease is significantly less than that of the Pakehas, but not so dramatically less as the 1953 Year Book would imply when it contrasts the Maori figures of 20 61 per 10,000 with that of 47·73 for the Pakeha population.

As for crime rates, Maoris are entitled to 5 8 per cent. of total imprisonments on the basis of age-composition of population. The actual number of Maori inmates in prison in 1951 was 17·9 per cent. of total committals (in 1952, Maoris represented 18·12 per cent. of the total prison population). Similarly, in regard to Supreme Court convictions, Maoris are entitled to 6 05 per cent., whereas they make up 19 81 per cent. of actual convictions.

The pattern of crime therefore seems reasonably clear: (a) Maoris represent about 4 8 per cent. of the population over fifteen years of age; (b) they are entitled to between 5 5 per cent. and 6 per cent. of offenders; (c) the actual rate of Maori serious crime is between 18 per cent. and 20 per cent. of all offenders.[1]

Without further investigation it is difficult to offer more than possible explanations of these Maori figures and the state of affairs they reveal. Urban and rural differences may be important; the patterns and kinds of crime may differ between Europeans and Maoris; our courts may have an unconscious bias against Maori offenders; the type of mental disorder from which the Maori suffers may be less likely to require hospitalisation; excessive consumption of alcohol may predispose the Maori towards crime as a release from intrapsychic tension—without alcohol, unreleased tensions might result in mental breakdown requiring hospitalisation.

The hypotheses are many. The facts themselves point towards some strain and stress in the process of social change. But the possibility should not be excluded, in comparing Mexican experience with New Zealand, that it is not so much the stresses of social change *per se* that are important variables as it is the differences between the personality structures of Maoris and, for instance, Tepoztecans. The basic personality structure of the Maori may in fact be too loosely organised (too unstable, in a non-evaluation sense) successfully to withstand social change stresses. Some measure of personal and social disorganisation is therefore inevitable. For other peoples such disorganisation, because of a more stable personality, may not be inevitable

## IV.

To return, in conclusion, more specifically to the job of the social scientist, whether anthropologist or social psychologist, in evaluating social change: his job is essentially one of understanding and advising on the tensions, the anxieties and the freedoms that block or encourage social change. Some few of these tensions may be due to the presence in the community of outside experts who, unfamiliar with the dynamics of social change, are unconsciously creating anxieties in the community perhaps through their ignorance of, or disregard for, local custom and tradition. Here the social scientist must think

[1] This summary, together with the figures in the preceding two paragraphs, I have taken, with permission, from Mr. McCreary's unpublished study.

of his job as that of an educator. He must try to make the members of the team with which he is associated more sophisticated and sensitive to the purely human and social problems.

Many of the tensions will be due to a lack of knowledge on the part of the community itself as to what is happening or is likely to happen to the web of human and social relationships as the result of social change. Here the social scientist must think of his job as partly that of a diagnostician, partly that of a researcher, partly that of an educator.

The social scientist as educator must realise that no programme of social change will be successful unless the people concerned fully understand what is proposed and freely consent to the project being initiated. Just what particular group of people are the ones to be educated must depend upon research into the social structure of the community and into the overt and implicit lines of authority within the community. Sometimes it is all the men, sometimes the women in the family environments, sometimes the grandmothers, sometimes influential chiefs who are the key people to be educated to the stage where consent is freely given. Research will naturally go far beyond the demarcation of lines of authority. Its exact emphasis will depend upon the technical change that is contemplated at a particular stage: whether health, agriculture or the like.

In study of the underlying dynamics of different social situations, the social scientist may develop a certain skill in predicting lines of tension that may become acute at different stages in the process of social change. Some of these tensions may be by-passed as the result of this knowledge. Others may be released by discussion with the community, or by changes in the impact of the action-programme. Because of this knowledge the programme should advance with relative smoothness. It should also take firm root in the soil of community life. In other words, it should permanently change the attitudes and the actions of the people concerned. This permanent change is the final and absolute measure of the success of an action programme.

I have not throughout this paper made any distinction between pure social science and applied social science, pure anthropology and applied anthropology I do not think that this dichotomy is particularly significant. Some find their research problems from reading books, monographs or listening to inspired teachers Others find theirs in so-called practical problems which they are asked to investigate as a preliminary to, or in the course of, a project designed to bring about social change. An approved scientific methodology and customary scientific techniques of investigation will be used in both cases. So long as the social scientist does not give advice that outruns his knowledge, nor scamp his research under pressure to provide answers, I do not see that he has become unscientific He is certainly subjected to occupational hazards that will not worry his purely academic colleague.

International action in the field of social change is likely to continue for some years perhaps just as long as there are governments and peoples in underdeveloped countries who wish to decrease their poverty, their ill-health and their illiteracy. Such change produces one of the more important challenges to the contemporary social scientist. In meeting it, it is surely a valid expectation that he will at the same time increase our understanding of the nature of personal and social relations.