

## Forecasting Post-Industrial Development

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A review of Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973).

IN this volume, Daniel Bell forecasts that in thirty to fifty years, a change will occur in the structural dimensions of advanced industrial societies ushering the post-industrial stage. This is manifested by the rapid growth of science and technology and correspondingly, the emergence of scientists and technicians as dominant figures of power. The structural features of post-industrial societies are distinguished from the traditional bipolar types — pre-industrial and industrial — each being differentiated mainly by their changing definitions of knowledge. Bell sees theoretical knowledge as the emerging axial principle that shall define the future course of the social structure in the post-industrial era. That is, as empiricism and experimentation had been the thrust since post-World War II, the future endeavor shall be the codification of theoretical knowledge to make it more applicable to numerous situations.

The conceptual scheme adopted by Bell utilizes societies' "axial structures" and "axial principles." He

views societies as constituting of three parts, namely: social structure (composed of the economy, technology and occupation system), polity (the arbiter of the conflicting claims and demands of individuals and groups), and culture (the expressive symbolism and meanings), with each part being governed by a distinct axial principle. He adopts this mode of analysis as a convenient way to determine the direction, trends and problems related to change. Currently, industrial societies are governed by the economizing principle for social structure, increased participation among the masses for polity and the enhancement of the self as the dominant cultural mode. Bell argues that as the social structural dimensions are more predictable for post-industrial societies, the dimensions for polity and culture are less defined. Hence, social structural dimensions may cut across advanced industrial societies but these do not necessarily mean a convergence in their polity and culture. He assumes that societies are not so "organic" or "integrated" as to be analyzable into a single system. Rather, they are increasingly "disjunctive."

Bell posits that the following structural changes will take place:

1. Because of significance of scientific knowledge, we shall see the su-

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premacv of the "managerial class" over owners in the control of corporations. "Merit" will be viewed as the more important avenue for the operation of the enterprise. Consequently, familial corporate control shall decline.

2. Property loses its importance as a basis of power. Skill and knowledge will instead be the bases for its acquisition. The stratification system shall, therefore, have scientists and technicians as the dominant figures.

3. There shall be a movement "away from governance by political economy to governance by political philosophy . . . a turn to non-capitalist modes of social thought" (p. 298) because scientists and technicians are guided by an ethos that is less concerned with self-interest and profit the old basis of the business civilization.

4. The service-producing sector shall acquire a dominant position over the goods-producing sector since the concern of society is with the improvement of quality of life reflected in the areas of education, health, trade, finance, communication and transportation, than with consumptive needs.

In defining the relationship between social structure and polity, the author touches on the critical issue of the relation between knowledge and power. When science and technology emerges as axial principles of social structure, involvement of the technical intelligentsia in the political process (e.g., planning, decision-making) may be expected. The social and ethical issues evolving from this development are with respect to:

1. the bureaucratization of science *vis-a-vis* the ideology of science, i.e., the demand that scientific pursuit be responsive to stipulated national and social needs may violate the spirit of free inquiry.

2. meritocracy *vis-a-vis* equality, i.e., meritocracy is a "myth" if occupational opportunities are not only based on technical competence but on sex, race and ethnic differences.

The disjunction between social structure and culture is rooted in the emphasis of the former or functional rationality and efficiency; and the latter or the enhancement of the self. Hence, as the economy or social structure is being regulated, "individualism in morals" is increasingly evident (p. 482). Post-industrial society has to come to grips with the conflict between the "notion that one should be 'free' to follow one's individual impulse" with "increasing pressure for communities to regulate the material conditions of life" (p. 483).

Bell substantiates his arguments by focusing mainly on the future directions of the United States extrapolated from the past and present structural dimensions. For instance, for the growth of the service sector, he compared the statistical trends of employment of the service over the goods-producing sector. Dominance of science-based endeavors was indicated by the growth of skilled population and science personnel, the utilization of science and engineering graduates, research and development efforts, etc.

The major criticism against Bell is with regard to his methodology. The evidences employed to forecast the structural dimensions of post-industrial societies are not adequate and persuasive enough. The author overlooks the dynamics or the processes involved in the emergence of the structural dimensions which may be considered as the "life and blood" of post-industrial society. He is more immersed with the description of the economy, technology and occupational structure that make up the social structure.

The empirical evidences to support his proposition about the decline of family capitalism are not sufficient to prove his point. Data on managerial social origins, social affiliations, ownership control voting stock in the enterprise, etc., are wanting; they cannot support the contention that structural change in the corporation is to be foreseen in the next few decades. Correspondingly, his assertion that property declines as a basis for stratification is to be doubted. There is, likewise, not enough proof to show that technical preparation, recruitment and selection cease to be economically-based. In fact, a preliminary issue that has not been answered is: where is the self-less ethos of the scientist supposed to be acquired? The response to this query would affect one's acceptance or rejection of the aforementioned proposition.

Bell fails to answer the issue about the path of development for the Third World countries which are currently

in the pre-industrial state under his paradigm. While he sees an evolutionary and linear trend for the U.S. culminating in the post-industrial stage, the applicability of this theory to the Third World can be questioned. As he sees that "societies for the first time are creating common technological foundations," one is apt to argue that the less developed countries may be able to short-circuit the developmental process. In fact, there is already a marked proliferation of science graduates in some of these countries even to a point where their economies fails to maximally utilize their manpower. Is this, therefore, indicative of the possible transformation of an ethos where self-interest and profit loses its predominance for "communal interest?" Does the answer to development resting on this scientific and technical class assumed to be inspired by this ethos? If, in fact, the emerging dominance of scientists and technocrats allows the Third World to skip the industrial phase, might one reconsider Bell's theory, i.e., might it not be that post-industrial society is not an aftermath of advanced industrial economies? Science is a universal revolution that is cutting across societies and the only distinction between less developed and developed countries seems to be with respect to the level of implementation and utilization of knowledge.

A point that is not clear is the relationship of social structure and polity. While Bell claims that social

structure does not determine polity but only poses management or policy issues for it (p. 38), he forecasts polity to be governed by a philosophy that is mainly "non-capitalist" (p. 298). This emerges as political decision-making is based on the ideas of the intelligentsia governed by communal ethic. As a consequence, this forecast is tantamount to an assertion of the influence of social structure on polity and contradicts his initial claim. (It seems that he is confused with what he likes polity to be rather than what it will turn out to be in post-industrial societies.)

Bell seems to vacillate in pinpointing who between the scientist and the politician shall ultimately acquire power. He evades the issue by considering "the relationship to technical and political 'decisions' in the next decade" to become in consequence one of the most crucial problems of public policy" (pp. 364-365). In resolving the conflict, he ends more by prescribing than forecasting what the outcome will be in declaring: "The politician and the political public will have to become increasingly versed in the technical character of policy, aware of the ramified impact of decisions as systems become extended" (p. 365).

In spite of these limitations, Bell's work should be exalted for his attempt to forecast the aftermath of advanced

industrial societies. This is a new tradition in the revolutionary theory of social change. Most view the industrial stage as the culminating point for the developmental process as evidenced by the bipolar types (i.e., sacred-secular, gemeinschaft-gessellschaft, traditional-modern, etc.) or the stages of development approach (i.e., pastoral, agricultural and industrial). Bell's consideration of the state of knowledge as a basis for distinguishing levels of societal development demands a closer scrutiny.

I found his Coda as the most gratifying part especially when he offered an agenda of questions, issues and problems that shall concern U.S. and other advanced economies for the next few years due to the rise of a new intelligentsia.

At best, this book is a call for scientists to reassess their role in the developmental process. It is a manifesto of what scientists should be rather than what they are; it emphasizes that in their ethos rests the future of their countries. If only for this, Bell should be applauded as a "communal ethos" is indeed wanting irrespective of any level or stage of development of any country. Therefore, this address should not only be directed to advanced capitalist economies, but more emphatically for less developed nations.