Aanzetten tot een interdisciplinaire benadering van sociaal-economische problemen
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SUMMARY
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY INTERPRETATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

This doctoral dissertation is based mainly on material already published together with a covering essay which brings out the underlying interdisciplinary conception and the interrelation of the different published works. The published items are:

- Economics and Sociology: Towards an Integration, Martinus Nijhoff, Leiden 1976, chapters 2 and 6;
- Inkomensverdeling en institutionele structuur: De invloed van institutionele veranderingen op de ontwikkeling van de inkomensgelijkheid, Stenfert Kroese, Leiden 1977;

Dominating these works is the author's conviction that a clearer grasp of current and future social problems may be obtained if economic analysis is supplemented by an appreciation of the role of cultural and psychological influences. For this an interdisciplinary approach is needed and the distinction between the social sciences should be less sharply drawn.

In essence the analysis presented is derived from the conceptual model of society developed in chapter 2 of Economics and Sociology. Taking as a point of departure both neoclassical economics and social exchange theory an attempt is made to reconcile man as a social actor with man as homo economicus. By applying the notion of scarcity and choice to social behaviour the general equilibrium model à la Walras may be extended to include such phenomena as the social norms and institutional structure of society. Just like prices, norms may be conceived of as the result of an exchange process, reflecting the preferences of individuals. The step from the stationary state to a more dynamic conception of society is made by introducing the development of science and technology as the prime mover of both economic and cultural evolution.

For analytical reasons a distinction has been made between the rate of evolutionary change and the cultural direction of change. The rate of change, or rather, the acceleration of the rate of change in the last decennia, plays a central role in "Anomie and Inflation", Economics and Society, chapter 6. Both phenomena are regarded as interdependent aspects of a state of disequilibrium, particularly occurring in times of rapid social change, when the
status quo is disintegrating in both the economic and social dimension. A decline in the legitimacy of social inequality is regarded as a major element in the recent evolution of Western society - induced by the development of science and technology. The rapid expansion since World War II of the number of social security provisions expresses this change in the common view of what is fair and equitable. A rather mysterious constancy was discovered in the share of profits plus social security payments in national income. This constancy was found to prevail not only in the Netherlands but also in other Western countries. Thus the diminishing profit share of the past decades is matched in mirror-image fashion by an increased share of social benefits in national income. Thus an important part of the contemporary reduction in inequality has been brought about by institutional change of a type which is missing in Tinbergen's distribution theory, in which the market forces are considered to be the major factor behind the trend towards increasing equality.

Maatschappelijke gevolgen van de "chip"-technologie is both a tentative synthesis and a further elaboration of the ideas developed in the preceding publications. The lessons of the past, in particular of the post-war period, provides the material on which the prediction of future trends is based. It should be stressed however, that - just like the preceding publications - the "chip" book does not come up with definite solutions. It claims to provide tentative guide lines to what should be a major focus of future research: an interdisciplinary approach to socio-economic problems.

T. Huppes