

THE OBSERVATION POST

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Preaching What We Practice

IN THE U.S. agriculture is on a sound basis because:

1. It is financially strong. The average commercial farm has assets of about \$30,000. Farms are getting larger and tenancy is diminishing.

2. Farmers are well informed and generally highly efficient. The research and extension assistance available to farmers enables them to produce ever-increasing quantities of food, feed, and fiber, and fewer people can do the job.

3. American people have become accustomed to nutritious diets and educational forces are promoting this desirable and important trend. As a consequence our people are more productive and live longer.

4. Benign legislation serves to safeguard the economic position of American farmers. The incentives of price supports catalyze investments in agricultural chemicals and farm machines.

5. The Federal Government and the states generously support educational and research institutions devoted to agriculture.

The fact is we have good farm practices and they are getting better. We can and do overproduce. Our major agricultural problem is to keep production and consumption in balance.

In contrast with the healthy agricultural situation in the United States it is known that about half of the world's people have been underfed and ill fed for a long time. In these underdeveloped areas a great majority of the labor force is engaged in agriculture. But, their agriculture is sick. The malady is due to a variety of deep-seated complications. There is no simple curative remedy.

Compared with the United States, agriculture in the underdeveloped nations may be summed up as follows:

1. Farmers are financially weak. Farms are small. Tenancy is common. The soils have been impoverished and farm equipment is often archaic.

2. The tillers of the soil are victims of a vicious cycle. They are poor and undernourished. Because their diet is deficient they are not productive. Because production is inadequate their diet is poor, and so on.

3. Farmers are generally uneducated. Farming is woefully inefficient. Agricultural research and extension have been negligible or nonexistent.

4. Legislation to provide economic incentives and financial security for farmers is lacking. Instead there are high land taxes and exorbitant financial penalties on borrowing. Credit and usury go hand in hand.

5. There is a dearth of agricultural colleges. The teaching of agronomy, horticulture, animal husbandry, and extension is pitifully inadequate compared with the need.

Opportunity and Responsibility

Only in recent years have we come to realize that world hunger and poverty, disease and ignorance are our problems. We cannot expect peace and tranquility on earth while disease afflicts and famine besets a large segment of the world's population.

Clearly there is an opportunity for the United States to render a great humanitarian service. We have already made generous contributions through the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. These efforts have been supplemented by the Point Four activities of the Mutual Security Administration and the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA).

Based on our unquestionable progress in the field of agriculture, it would certainly appear that we are qualified to preach what we practice. We must, however, control our zeal to set the world right by our standards. It is necessary to differentiate between preaching what we practice and teaching what we practice.

The need for such a differentiation becomes crystal clear when one examines the reasons for inadequate food production in the underdeveloped nations. There are technological problems which include education, extension, and financial assistance for agricultural chemicals and farm machinery. In these fields we can and may teach what we practice. In fact we have been invited by many countries to do so.

There are also psychological problems involving national legislation, customs,

credits, and rents. Here preaching is needed to effect needed changes in the economic, social, and political structure of a country. However, the voices should come from within and not from us. Our grants in aid do not give us the right to tell free peoples how to run their internal affairs.

Practice Makes Perfect

It is generally recognized that the efficiency of agriculture in any nation is directly related to the number of scientific and trained workers in the field. It takes entomologists, agronomists, horticulturists, plant pathologists, animal husbandrymen, and extension workers to create an environment that spells progress in food production. The work of many people and the thunder of many voices are needed to overcome inertia, ignorance, and indifference. This situation is analogous to catalyzed chemical reactions where the rate is proportional to catalyst concentration. Rapid developments in agriculture depend on the number of trained workers, each acting as a catalyst.

During the past five years, the agencies now represented in the Foreign Operations Administration have brought about 4000 people to the United States for training in agriculture and home economics. Most of these visitors came from Europe. By and large they had previous experience in agriculture and they stayed for only brief periods. This was doing first things first.

It is here suggested that the United States (and other countries) undertake to train large armies of agricultural workers in our own country. These trainees should be assigned to areas where the types of farming and crops would be similar to those in their native country. The trainees *should be put to work* and be given the opportunity to learn from experience as well as education and observation. After we have trained an adequate nucleus of technologically competent farm and extension workers we should wish them God-speed and suggest that they preach what we practice. The continued guidance and inspiration of a competent teacher would be desirable. If this can be done, we can hopefully look forward to the day when we no longer have underdeveloped nations on earth.