

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

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Dear Dan:

This letter is entirely gratuitous and not based on any detailed information. Nevertheless, I did get some feedback recently from a program which I assume is run under your office. I do not know the exact title of the program unless it was something like "Visit America," but in any case, it involved taking a group to various places in the country to observe the way America attempts to cope with such problems as race, poverty, public health and education within the over-all context of the Title IX approach. The feedback was that the program was extraordinarily interesting to the Americans involved, and a real eye-opener as to what is going on in the country, but may have suffered from two major defects.

First, the schedule, particularly at the outset, required people to work endless hours after they were just off airplanes from halfway around the world. In this connection, I have been informed by foreign officials who came to the United States under various A.I.D. or State programs in the past that the American puritan ethic which seems to find merit in requiring visitors to work on a tight and almost inhuman schedule was strictly counterproductive from their standpoint. In the recent exercise, I gather one man was fresh off an airplane from Asia and virtually had to withdraw from certain exercises from sheer fatigue. I have heard this refrain so often in the past that I wonder whether it still remains true and reflects an ingrained habit of ours.

Secondly, I gather that the foreign participants in the exercise were USAID or Embassy locals who were no doubt being rewarded for their service by a trip to the States, but the question raised was what influence these local employees would have on the functions of the governments of their countries. Would it not have been vastly more productive to have officials of the government ministries observe all this? I can scarcely imagine a USAID local being in a position to "transfer" American Title IX techniques to his own country. If anyone could do it, it would seem to be key officials of the ministries concerned.

Finally, and not by way of any feedback but strictly a speculation of my own, the whole question of transferability does arise and also the question as to whether we are showing these people our problems or our solutions. Perhaps we feel that our problems of today anticipate theirs of tomorrow, but if we have not yet evolved solutions, what do we have to teach anybody? Of course, if the purpose of the trips is to reward faithful employees of overseas missions with a visit to the United States, they might be better rewarded by a program less directed to our agonizing problems and more directed to those aspects of our national life which a foreigner might conceivably find enjoyable as well as instructive.

As I stated above, all of this is very gratuitous and not based on any real background in the matters about which I talk. I just figured that there might be some food for thought here.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

Ogden Williams  
Coordinator  
Viet-Nam Training Center