

To all staff at the English section of Doag Hill

Please read the enclosed general description of the IVS education team meeting at the recent annual conference. Afterwards, please answer the following questions:

1. Would you be interested in working on the preparation of a paper which would give suggestions for implementing the 1962 Education Reform Act in the English section?

Yes _____ No _____

2. If so, please number in order of preference the areas in which you would like to work:

- _____ a. Suggesting changes of course content within the present academic curriculum (e.g., math, geography, history, English language, science, etc.)
- _____ b. Suggesting work and study programs for non-academic time (in agriculture, rural development, shop, health, youth movement, etc.). Particularly important is to develop a program for an English section communal plot of rice and/or vegetables to be farmed by students and teachers.
- _____ c. Suggesting overall changes in the organization so as to ensure that products of the English section will go out and work in rural areas (curriculum, clubs, entrance, summer programs, etc.)

3. If you are not interested in working in the preparation of this paper, please be kind enough to indicate why:

- a. no time _____
- b. don't believe so much emphasis should be given to 1962 Education Reform Act _____
- c. other (please explain) _____

THE TIME IS VERY SHORT! WE HOPE TO PREPARE THIS PAPER IN TWO MONTHS AT THE LATEST! PLEASE VOLUNTEER! PLEASE BE WILLING TO GIVE THE PROJECT TIME AND INTEREST!

Please respond - even if negatively - and place in Franfman's box

The annual conference of IVS was held on February 7 and 13, 1968. In February 7 the members of IVS Education with the district education in Laos. They discussed the role of education in the society of Laos and the kind of contribution that volunteers might make together with their fellow Laotian teachers.

The discussion was along the following lines:

Laos has many economic problems. Imports are much higher than exports. Government income account for only 40% of the annual budget. The first development goal for Laos must be for it to become economically independent. As His Royal Highness, Prince Savanna Phouma has pointed out (see Laos Press, Nov. 24, 1967), the first step is for Laos to begin exporting rice and other agricultural products. Thus the first priority is for Laos to develop the RURAL AREAS.

Education has an important place in Laos. It is the largest nationwide organization representing forces of modernization. It has historically been very successful in changing people's attitudes. Also, education is a particularly great influence upon those who study at the secondary level and beyond. It is upon these future leaders that progress in Laos depends.

But now there seems to be many problems with education in Laos. Children who go to school do not like to return to rural areas. They often do not respect the farmer or farming life. Often they become consumers and not producers of wealth. Often they do not like to work with their hands. This is a big problem. For if Laos is to become strong, everyone must produce wealth. It is most important for the more educated to be a good example. If they are not a good example, Laos cannot progress.

In 1962 the National Assembly passed the Education Reform Act which realized these problems. The Act aimed at training future farmers in the primary schools, and leaders who would work to develop rural areas at the secondary school level. Although most people agree with the Act, it has proven to be rather difficult to put it into practice. This is largely because everyone is very busy in the day-to-day work of keeping the present system going. It is difficult to find time to write new textbooks, new curricula, develop new programs. But somehow this must be done if Laos is to become a fully independent, self-reliant nation. Every school should produce rice and vegetables. Teachers and students should work together in the fields. Only this will teach students how to farm, how to develop rural areas. It will teach them that farming can be profitable. It will teach them the importance of hard work, of producing as well as consuming. When they see their teachers working with them, students will understand that even if one has education one must work with one's hands. It will mean more money for the schools so that they will not be so dependent on foreign aid.

But only hard work is not enough. Students must also study agriculture theory in the classroom so that they understand why they do what they do. At the secondary level they must also study rural development so that they will understand the needs of the farmer, and how to satisfy them.

Also, it might be desirable to introduce more emphasis upon agriculture in other academic subjects. For example students could learn the same principles in math as they do now, but apply these principles to agricultural problems. Students might also learn healthy attitudes about thinking of the country as a whole, and self-reliance. They might also continue to learn more and more about the tradition and culture of Laos.

At the end of the meeting, it was decided to continue consideration of these problems when people were back in their schools. It was decided to try to form committees of Laotians and volunteers to prepare a paper detailing suggestions of what could be done to help implement the 1962 Education Reform Act. It was hoped that these suggestions could be prepared by the end of April, 1968. These proposals would then be submitted to Laotian education officials. The next step would be to get to work and draw up new textbooks, curricula, and programs according to the wishes of these officials.

