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ROUTING SLIP

OFFICE FOR RURAL AFFAIRS

Initials

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Remarks:

From R. Holbrooke Date 8/28/1963

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Mr. Rufus Phillips, AD/RA

DATE: August 24, 1963

FROM : Richard Holbrooke, USOM/RA *rw*

SUBJECT: The Berkeley Training Program of September 1962 - January 1963

Upon conclusion of our Southeast Asia training program at the University of California last January, I returned to Washington, where I communicated my views on the program to several people in AID and the State Department. At that time I was told, with some justification, that any evaluation of the program should wait until a certain amount of work in the field had been completed.

After two months of work in Rural Affairs, and having a understanding now of the nature of the work here, I would like to submit the following brief comments on the Berkeley program:

1. The language portion was adequate, especially in light of the fact that 13 people of widely different abilities had to sit in one class. It would have been better to have learned the southern dialect instead of northern.

2. The area studies portion of the program was not adequate. In a 16-week period of time, at one of America's great universities, a course on Viet Nam and Laos should be taught by people who have an intimate knowledge of the area. This was not the case - the two men in charge were experts on Malaya and Thailand, and proximity did not breed understanding. The social customs of both these countries, which we heard a great deal about under the guise of "General Asian Culture," do not necessarily apply to Viet Nam.

3. The key to the course was supposed to be Community Development, taught and supervised by Dr. Jack Mezirow. Here, we were told, we would be taught the skills that we must possess for our work in Viet Nam. Since we had little knowledge of what the actual situation and actual American involvement was in Viet Nam, we were not able to react to this statement with the proper response, which I now feel should have been: "irrelevant nonsense"! For the Community Development portions of the course bear no relation whatsoever to the problems we face in Viet Nam. Repeatedly we were told that "Politics should not intrude on your work," a statement which most of us questioned deeply. But if one were to accept what we were told at Berkeley as the truth, then work in Viet Nam would not be possible, so diametrically opposed are the two. Indeed the irony of what happened at Berkeley - and this is what we could not know until we arrived here - is that the more effective the Berkeley faculty would have been with a person, the less effective he would be out here. A total lack of understanding of what Rural Affairs does - and of the whole situation here: this was the keynote at Berkeley.

4. Some of these criticisms may be blamed on inadequate communication between Berkeley and the field, but I think that the primary failures lie with the concept of Community Development as an academic discipline. The idea of Community Development-helping people to help themselves - is perhaps the basic key to the future of the developing nations. But it is not a very complex idea, and does not require academic repetition. It works best when it works instinctively, as it did in the United States, without professors of education, in the nineteenth century. While a certain amount of theorizing and discussion on the subject is invaluable, it cannot justify itself - although it is certainly trying rather hard - as a sustaining academic discipline, "clothed in its own mystique."

5. Proper training for us would have been some specialized knowledge of, perhaps:

- A. Sanitation and Public Health
- B. Agriculture - just a basic background
- C. Public Safety and Internal Security - a vital area in Vietnam
- D. The nature of Communist Insurrection, and the ways - successful and unsuccessful - that we have resisted it in the past.

6. A week of observations, perhaps in Philippines or Jamaica or Puerto Rico, rather than four months of Berkeley.

In sum, there was no justification whatsoever for the expense and time involved in this course.