

Sent to John Casey

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D r a f t

TO: Dr. Wesley R. Fishel, Chief Advisor  
FROM: Dr. John D. Montgomery, Head, Academic Instruction Section  
SUBJECT: Organization of a National Institute of Administration.

Many of the problems of organization and academic standards at the National Institute arise from the fact that it ~~is~~ functioning as a semi-political arm of the Presidency. Even if competent management were provided at the top, it is likely that certain of these deficiencies in the program would persist.

An alternative organization, the establishment of a Faculty of Administration in the University of Saigon, headed by a dean, and retaining the same faculty members and academic and training functions of the present National Institute, would present the following advantages.

- (1) It would help solve academic problems that are not now properly confronted by the National Institute of Administration, such as providing a regular academic schedule or calendar in advance of each term so that faculty members would know approximately how many meetings would be available for each course; systematizing the grading system by the acceptance of university-wide standards, thus relieving faculty members of the burden of devising standards appropriate to themselves (which they are now forced to do independently of their colleagues); raising standards of teaching and of student performance by the adoption of university academic regulations regarding attendance and quality of work; improving student attitudes toward study through the example provided by students enrolled in other discipline; and improving faculty and academic attitudes toward research by providing a more suitable environment.

- (2) It would make university facilities available to the Institute and thus reduce duplication of academic effort in such fields as library administration and in the giving of certain courses already done in the various faculties of the university (for example, law courses are probably better taught in the Faculty of Law and languages instructions in the Faculty of Letters).
- (3) It would improve the prospect of recruiting capable students from other disciplines in the University ~~es~~ by offering closer integration of the curriculum in public administration with other academic studies, and by gaining more direct access to the student body.
- (4) It would improve the flexibility of the program of instruction in public administration by enabling it to accomodate to changing needs of the nation. This is difficult under the present circumstances where a presidential *arrête* is necessary for any change in the curriculum. If more flexibility of curriculums were possible, for example, the probable rise of interest in business administration and the probable reduction in governmental demands for professional administrators could be accomodated simultaneously by making slight changes in the course offerings.
- (5) It would improve the farcical equation which now exists between the National Institute of Administration and the University of Saigon, and place the former on a par with the Faculty of Law which is its principal counterpart in training for the Vietnamese public services. This would make the post of Rector (Dean) less politically desirable, than it now ~~seems~~ is: it would emphasize its essentially academic and administrative character and thus enable the National Institute to free

~~itself~~

itself from political pettifoggery which now inhibits its growth and development as an institution.

In considering this recommendation, the following disadvantages must be weighted re-  
against the benefits that would result from this organization:

- (1) It may be argued that Rector Trinh, who is pro-French and personally skeptical of American values in higher education, would be as petulant and unapproachable as Rector Thong. Because of a difference in the personal caliber of these two men, however, this argument is not a serious objection, especially in view of the prospect that our relationships would be with the Dean of the Faculty of Administration rather than with the Rector of the university. As to the pro-French attitude, this is to be expected: almost all leaders of higher education in Vietnam were educated in the French tradition. This need not necessarily be a serious handicap to us in view of the current French effort to modernize and improve their own instruction in public administration and the fact that - for better or for worse - the administrative structure of Vietnam is more French than American in any case.
- (2) It may be objected that lowering the status of the National Institute of Administration by bringing it on a level of the Faculty of Law would reduce the prestige of administration in Vietnam and would also lower the standing of MSU in the hierarchy of the Vietnamese government. As to the former problem, it must be conceded at once that the status of the National Institute in the long run will depend upon its excellence, and that the Faculty of Law probably has at least an equivalent prestige in Vietnam to that afforded to the National Institute. As to the status of MSU in the governmental hierarchy in Vietnam, this is an unimportant consideration

in terms of our objectives here. If by lowering our standing in the hierarchy of Vietnamese institutions we can make a greater contribution to the development of public administration, we ought to do it.

- (3) It may be argued that removing the National Institute from the office of the Presidency would cost it the support of the President and subject it to less predictable elements of the Vietnamese society. But presidential interest in the activities of a Faculty of Administration in the University of Saigon could be as great as that in the National Institute; and it could surely exercise a more wholesome influence from a greater distance than from the close range of miniscule direction now flowing from the Presidency.

It is not my purpose to evaluate the political feasibility of the proposed change, but simply to suggest a principle upon which a staff agreement might become the basis for future MSU action.