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You remember that Vice-President Wallace suggested that the Foundation should support only three things in Mexico: health, nutrition and agriculture. Here attached are Carl Sauer's comments.

JHW

The Wallace's idea that the Foundation should support only three things in Mexico, - health, nutrition, + agriculture.

1) Public health. Of course things are bad here by American standards, but they are improving nearly as fast as can be expected. The chief obstacle is economic + political. Medical science is not in bad shape wherever doctors can make a living. Consider that the minimum official wage (which is not observed in some sections) is 33¢ American a day. The majority of Mexicans don't earn enough to pay for medical service, even when it is very reasonable. The government requires every candidate for medical licensing to spend a season at his own expense in free public health service in a district lacking medical facilities. What they need is socialized medicine, but the finances of the government will not permit it. The first people paid are the military, who constitute the gendarmerie that keeps the country in order and the government in power. Pay the generals + their staffs first. Now it looks as though Mexico was going to militarize more strongly, which will mean less for other things.

Emphasize poverty rather than ignorance. Mexicans take nicely to concrete tasks like medicine and surgery. There is an improving group of European (German) refugees, trying to get established in practice. Drug stores are very well equipped. You are likely to find a well-stocked refrigerator with Kelley products in towns of ten and twenty thousand. German synthetic derivatives are available in full lines, including the latest developments.

Mexican cities cannot use water as we do. Mostly it rains about three months out of the year + there simply are not the rivers of water available to be run through sewers and for the flushing of street dirt. Often water must be turned off at night. If there are weak spots in the pipe lines there then (when empty of water) receive contamination by draining into them from the ground. Mexico City e.g. has an excellent water supply as to quantity. But when the water is turned off, filth from the city gets into the pipe lines here + there (pipes sink + joints crack in the unstable ground, pipes become corroded + funds are not available to keep them constantly overhauled).

Mexico is short of fuel. Hot water, boiled water is a luxury. The country has almost no coal. Fuel is primarily charcoal, which is costly + slow. Soap is expensive. Provide cheap hot water + soap in the American manner. They'd love to use it, if they could afford it, and a lot less babies would die. Milk is a growing hazard. American influence (as by returned Mexicans) has greatly increased with drinking (formerly only infants + the old). The government has tried to control its quality by the usual methods, but sterilization is difficult to carry through: a) It raises the cost directly, b) The cost of maintaining adequate inspection is prohibitive.

Meanwhile the sun is the great antiseptic. There having been no revolution for a dozen years, the population has increased as never before in Mexican history, and hence there are more poor people who can afford none of the protective measures to safeguard their health. The major problem is economic. Find the funds for public hygiene + the Mexicans will make good use of them. Beware the attitude that if we instruct them, they will learn from us.

(2) Nutrition. Same line of argument. They do amazingly well, considering what they have to spend. A Mexican is short of calories or of vitamins, if he is too poor to buy them. Watch the purchases in the markets and the way in which the family's expenditures are distributed. They get an amazing lot for what they spend and dietary deficiencies are economic, not cultural. Cook of our physiology department has made nutritional studies down here in the past year in different localities. He finds the greatest

Shortage in animal fats (too expensive). But don't get the idea that they would eat better if they had nutritious experts to advise them. Sae has a good deal of interest in the Mexican kitchen and if there is any ^{other} country in which sound nutrition is practised as far as the pocket book permits, I don't know it. But I don't know how the fruits, vegetables are bought so far and marketed for so little. - Aside from inability to buy - alcoholism is the principal thing wrong - again quite variable from district to district. I'd say that checking the inordinate consumption of cheap bad molasses alcohol would do more to put the family budget in proper shape than anything else. The govt knows it.

3) Agriculture: A grand job to be done or to be messed up beyond making good. The first step would be in economic geography: Identify the occurrence and range of every domesticated plant form together with its utility in the kitchen and in agricultural practice (soil, climate, seasonal labor in planting & harvest, tolerance of extreme weather, of pests). Secondly, make sure that every genetically fixed form is preserved and grown in adequate quantity for experimental purposes. Thirdly, set up breeding centers for the development of better strains. Remember that the gene range of maize, beans, etc. is enormously beyond that available to the American plant breeder, that an individual 'plant' like 'maize' has much more varied uses than in our commercial agriculture, that a large stock of native species is present which do not exist in the U.S., that a large number of old world Mediterranean plants are established. The possibilities of improvement by selection are enormous, but such selection should proceed from the local materials. A good aggressive bunch of American agronomists + plant breeders could ruin the native resources for food and all by pushing their American commercial stocks. The little agricultural work that has been done by experiment station people here has been working that very mistake, by introducing exotic forms instead of working on the selection of ecologically adjusted native items. The possibilities of disastrous destruction of local genes are great unless the right people take hold of such work. And Mexican agriculture cannot be pointed toward standardization as a few commercial types without upsetting native economy & culture hopelessly. The example of Iowa is about the most dangerous of all for Mexico. Unless the Americans understand that, they'd better keep out of this country entirely. This thing must be approached from an appreciation of the native economies as being basically sound. -

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