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Future RF Plans for India : Panjab University at Chandigarh (UPC)

Discussions of priorities and plans for future RF work in India will undoubtedly give major attention to concentration on the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI). KWT's diary on his recent Delhi visit, along with other views and proposals received, suggest concerted RF efforts in the institutional development of IARI to strengthen research and training there in agricultural programs and also in important new fields or problem areas. Plans to build teaching and research in agricultural economics might be widened to developmental economics as a whole; fundamental research on India's major nutrition problems might be introduced; research and experiments might also be undertaken on practical communication problems, of the sort widespread in India, whose solution would facilitate circulation and adoption of new ideas, principles and practices.

In this memo, however, I would like to propose that in addition to a stronger focus of RF on IARI we might also give close continuing attention and developmental support to UPC. This might eventually involve assignment of one or a few RF staff, though nothing like the scale of the agriculture operating program in India or what might be contemplated for IARI.

Considerations:

1. The IARI, as I understand its situation, is an institution under the supervision and control of India's Central Government, specifically authorities of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Lines and differences of jurisdiction in Delhi will pose real problems in relating work at IARI, for optimum results, with other institutions in Delhi engaged in important research and training and in which - in the past at least - the RF has taken interest and provided support.

2. More important I think, the status and role of IARI places it largely outside the existing system of higher education in India, except of course for agricultural organizations, notably its universities. Yet these universities and their constituent and affiliated colleges do by far the major job of advanced education in India. The extent to which IARI is out of this system may indicate the extent to which work and results at IARI will not significantly influence practices or effects of Indian advanced education, except broadly the agricultural domain. Part of the justification for the RF's University Development Program is the value and promise of improved training for individuals with a role in national development; also that promising new patterns of higher education and research may be established and then have an influence out of selected first-rate universities. This sound concern with education for leadership and educational patterns would not be fulfilled if the RF has no plan or program for the needed improvement of Indian universities.

3. So far RF officer observation and discussion of Indian universities and the system of higher education have yielded the negative conclusion that there is no university in India with the resources, leadership and scope to be attractive as one of our selected universities. To me it is increasingly clear that the University of Delhi has too many handicaps and internal problems for the foreseeable future to be acceptable within the University Development Program.

4. UPC, however, does appear to have a number of strengths and unusual assets among India's 47-odd universities. A few might be briefly noted.

(a) In location UPC is readily accessible from Delhi and moreover is situated in the capital of one of the most industrious, productive and efficiently governed states in India.

(b) The plant of UPC is new and by Indian standards extraordinarily complete and efficient. Built since 1959, it has had massive capital support from the Indian University Grants Commission and the State Government of the Panjab. In addition to a very good library and ample research and teaching facilities UPC has relatively the best residential accommodations among Indian universities for students and faculty.

(c) Leadership of UPC is notably strong, starting with its able, forward-looking and effective Vice Chancellor Dr. A. C. Joshi, recently re-appointed for a 3-year term. Part of his authority and success comes from the unusually strong support of UPC from state ministries and agencies of education and, more than that, the chief ministers and government of Panjab State, as noted one of the most hard-driving and progressive in India thanks to individuals like Chief Minister Kairon and Chief Secretary Randhawa (well known to RWC).

(d) One of the advantages of its newness is that UPC has been able to develop an academic organization, departments and faculty without the usual hampering of entrenched interests and obligations. UPC has tried to innovate both in fields of study and approaches neglected by other universities. Its departments vary in caliber of faculty, curriculum and students, and the best are as good as departments to be found any place else in India.

If there is agreement that attention and developmental support to UPC is not ruled out, then RF officers including LAG and CMH visiting India could extend our knowledge of major potentialities at UPC so that a set of feasible priorities by field and in operational planning could be formulated during the balance of 1963.

There is every reason to assume that were the RF to take an active and continuing interest in UPC this could be closely related to major efforts in Delhi as focussed on IARI.

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