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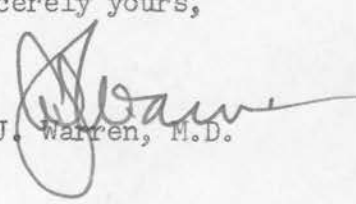
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To Members of the Commission:

It has been suggested that as a member of The Rockefeller Foundation Commission on Review of the International Health Division, the enclosed document by Mr. Robert D. Calkins of the General Education Board would be of interest to you.

Sincerely yours,

  
A. J. Warren, M.D.

Point IV Seminar  
Washington, D.C.  
May 17, 1951

## AN EXPERIENCE IN SOUTHERN DEVELOPMENT

by

Robert D. Calkins, Director  
General Education Board

### Introduction

There exists no organized body of knowledge describing the process by which a people may develop an underdeveloped area. That gap in our knowledge and the current need for such knowledge are, I suppose, the major reasons for the existence of this Seminar. You are concerned here, no doubt, with the accumulation of evidence on the basis of which you may formulate a useful conception of the process and the strategy of economic development.

It is a curious fact that, whereas for 300 years most of the world has been developing backward areas, we still know very little about how to develop such areas. In one sense, modern history is the record of the process, yet it is usually an inadequate record, and we scarcely look to history for the information we seek. History at best is an account of how given people developed given countries. It tells us little about the motivations that prompted people to undertake the development that on the printed page seems to flow with such logical inevitability from causes to effects. History tells us even less of the trigger forces that were used, or can be used, to set in motion the influences that promote economic development. What we need in our present inquiry is knowledge of the process and the strategy by which the economic and social development of an area may be stimulated from within or from without.

My purpose is not to pronounce with any finality upon this process or strategy. Instead, I bring you an account of a modest experience in the hope that it may suggest insights of some help in your deliberations.

My comments will be presented in two parts. In the first part I shall sketch very briefly some of the experience of a philanthropic organization in promoting the development of the southern states of this country. In the second part I shall, by drawing on this experience, suggest a number of conclusions, principles or maxims, some more hypothetical than verified, that may be applicable in the development of other areas. I leave to your consideration whether, and under what conditions, these conclusions or principles may be applicable in various areas of the world.

### I The Experience

During the past 50 years various philanthropic agencies have tried to help the southern states recover from the devastations of the Civil War and

to catch up with the social and economic advance in the rest of the country. The General Education Board has been concerned with this problem in a special sense. It was established in 1902 by Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Sr., for the promotion of education in the United States, without distinction of race, sex or creed. From its inception the Board has worked to improve education in the South. For some time it carried on educational activities all over the country, but the program outside the South was discontinued 11 years ago. My remarks here relate to the Board's experience in the 15 southern states. Although the Board's immediate purpose has been the promotion of education, its ultimate interest implicitly has been the improvement of human well-being through education.

### Basic Issues

Any agency that seeks to promote development in another culture inevitably encounters two basic questions: (1) Is it really in the interest of "backward" peoples to disrupt or to modify their established practices, their faith, and their institutions, or to pursue economic development which entails such disruptions? (2) Is it desirable to impose or transplant foreign practices upon a "backward" people?

These are questions not to be taken lightly. We may think we act out of a generous interest in the welfare of the natives, but the measure of welfare is almost certain to be our own, not theirs. We look upon the saving of lives and the reduction of pain as desirable in themselves, but primitive peoples often regard them differently. They may question the validity of programs that save lives from disease only to lose them by starvation. They may question the validity of reducing pain and suffering when by their standards bearing pain and suffering is a test of character. This is not a foreign trait entirely, for in this country we find vestiges of our hardy ancestors who regard with contempt the tenderfoot who can not endure hardship. We look favorably upon the rewards of urbanization and industrial life, but many people deplore these innovations as destructive to cultural and spiritual values treasured more highly. Our easing of physical hardship only to increase psychological and spiritual hardship may not be a net gain. The fact that such attitudes may in time be changed does not alter the basic question as to whether they should be changed against the wishes of the people involved. No question of economic development is more subtle or important than this, but I must pass over it here.

These problems were not serious for the General Education Board in its southern program. Great numbers of the southern people wanted the improvements available in the North; their culture was basically the same as that in the North; and many of their cultural objectives were the same. Nevertheless, the southern people believed in self-determination; and, while they welcomed sympathetic help, they did not want northern practices imposed by northern "carpetbaggers." They jealously guarded their right to introduce these practices in their own way. In so doing, they were cautious to protect local customs. A notable example was the preservation of racial segregation.

### Initial Conditions

The Board began in 1902 with an interest in improving higher education. It soon discovered, however, that in the southern states most of the colleges and universities were woefully weak and many of them were hardly more than academies doing high school work. Public school systems had been recently established, but in most states high schools were available only in the larger towns and cities and grade schools were by no means adequate in rural areas. For Negroes there were almost no grade schools in rural areas and very few high schools even in urban centers. At that time over 84 per cent of the Negroes lived in rural areas and 83 per cent of the entire population was rural. Agriculture, mainly cotton and tobacco, was the principal source of livelihood. The problem before the Board was to encourage the development of a system of education that would help the people to realize economic and cultural benefits comparable to those available in other sections of the country.

### Approach

Extensive travel and study led the Board to adopt a strategy in its work.

1. It was immediately apparent that higher education could not be substantially improved until a satisfactory system of public schools was developed to provide the necessary educational preparation and the requisite demand for higher education.

2. It was apparent also that no foundation could finance an educational system for the South, and no foundation should do so even if it could; for unless there were local interest in an educational system and unless it came as the result of local effort and support, it would not be properly maintained. The officers shared the view of Mr. Rockefeller that "The only thing which is of lasting benefit to man is that which he does for himself." The Board concluded that a slow advance generated from within would be more effective in the long run than a more rapid advance provided from without. It therefore resolved that no system of higher education or public education should be imposed on the South, but instead should be created by the southern people themselves out of their own interest and insofar as possible out of their own means.

3. These convictions led to the conclusion that the Board should work sympathetically with the South, not for it. It should help the South to help itself, but it should not do for the South what the South must learn to do for itself. In brief, the Board decided to help southern leaders to see their problems and to enlist local interest and support. Accordingly, in 1905 the Board set out to stimulate the creation of a system of public schools for whites and Negroes. It offered to pay the salary of a professor in each state university, who would spend half his time training teachers and the other half stimulating local groups to establish schools. Later, as this work progressed, the Board paid the salaries of additional personnel in the state departments of education to carry on this promotional work, then to establish standards, and



finally to provide supervision. In less than 20 years a public school system was well enough established so that the Board's support for personnel could be reduced or terminated.

4. The exceedingly low incomes in the South presented a serious obstacle to educational progress. Unless the economic base could be broadened, the South would not be able to provide adequate funds to build and maintain a system of public schools. An opportunity was soon found whereby the Board could encourage economic improvement through agriculture, which was then the principal source of livelihood. At the time (1906) Dr. Seaman A. Knapp of Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College was establishing demonstration farms as a means of convincing farmers that, through scientific methods of farming, yields could be sufficiently increased to offset the ravages of the boll weevil. He insisted that with better seed, better fertilizer, better cultivation practices, cotton yields could be increased two- or three-fold. The Federal Government was providing funds for these demonstration farms in the infested areas of Texas, but, under interpretations of Federal authority that now seem strange, it was held that Federal funds could not be expended in areas not already infested with the boll weevil. Yet it was apparent that the improved methods of agriculture were applicable not only in boll weevil areas but in others as well. At this point the Board took an interest in Dr. Knapp's methods and agreed to finance the establishment of demonstration farms in southern states which could not be aided with Federal funds. The grants were made on condition that Dr. Knapp supervise the entire program. This help began in 1906 and was continued until 1913. At the peak, over 100,000 demonstration farms were operated over the South and hundreds of thousands of farmers had an opportunity to witness the results of these methods.

The farm demonstration work was education by demonstration and was intended to improve the practices of adult farmers. Very shortly it became apparent that some effort should be made to train the next generation of farmers as well, and consequently farm boys' and girls' clubs were established with support from the Board. The need for better food practices in the home was likewise evident, and the Board supported a number of homemaking clubs for farm wives. These activities extended to Negroes as well as to whites. The effect was heartening. Productivity was increased in many areas of the South, and incomes rose. In consequence, tax revenues increased; appropriations for schools were expanded; and a greater demand for education developed among all classes of citizens. This work, begun by Dr. Knapp, led eventually to the establishment of the Farm Extension Service and the Home Demonstration Service in the Department of Agriculture.

5. In many sections of the South the people were undernourished, languid, shiftless, and uninterested in better farms or education. These people, according to Dr. Charles W. Stiles, were suffering from hookworm, and it was his estimate that many of them could be cured at a cost of no more than fifty cents per capita. After several years of frustration in trying to interest governmental agencies in tackling the hookworm problem, the matter was brought to the attention of the Board and Mr. Rockefeller. As a result, the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission was established in 1909 with Mr. Rockefeller's support for a campaign against hookworm in the South. This commission had to work at the

grass roots. It pursued successfully several elementary rules of conduct. It worked with established agencies, thus insuring some permanency of organization and interest. It helped these agencies to become more effective by working inconspicuously to help local leaders who did the work. It sought no glory or credit for itself and tried to preserve the integrity and prestige of local leaders and local organizations. After 1913 this work was taken over by The Rockefeller Foundation, but within a decade hookworm was largely under control and the cause of sanitation and public health was greatly advanced under local leadership.

#### Later Activities

I shall not pause to note the full range of the Board's activities but I should mention that, following these early beginnings, the Board helped to establish a few outstanding medical schools in order to lift the quality of medical training and to improve medical practice. As the public schools improved the Board gave more attention to the strengthening of colleges and universities. It helped to build up local support for higher education by offering contingent grants that had to be matched with local funds. It helped local efforts to build industrial training schools and colleges for Negroes. It helped to establish craft training for mountain people. It supported surveys and studies and helped local groups to formulate educational plans and programs.

By the mid-thirties the South had made substantial progress, but economically it was still at the bottom in the list of states. It was then referred to as the nation's No. 1 economic problem. But the forces of improvement were at work. Agriculture was beginning to diversify and mechanize. Towns and cities were growing and industry was offering new opportunities for employment. More children were attending school, and the labor force was being upgraded into more productive pursuits.

#### Recent Activities

In light of these new conditions, the General Education Board shifted its program. It undertook to direct its aid more specifically at strategic points where major advances could be made. It set out to encourage research and training that would improve the utilization of the fisheries, forests, grazing lands, and other resources. It encouraged the colleges to improve their programs in soil science, farm management, and agricultural economics. It fostered better nutrition and dietary practices; better health and sanitation. It supported programs in public administration in an effort to improve state and local government. It encouraged science and scientific training so as to facilitate the growth of industry. It helped also to strengthen programs in the social sciences, in the humanities, and professional subjects.

More recently with the development of agriculture, industry and urban life, the need for strong centers of instruction and research has arisen, and the Board is now interested in laying the educational foundations that will produce the trained farmers, scientists, engineers, teachers, architects and

other personnel that must carry forward the advances now so well under way. At the other extreme the Board is trying to help some of the most needy states to move forward more rapidly.

The task is not completed and will never be wholly completed. Per capita incomes in the South are now 64 per cent of incomes in the rest of the country but they are rising faster than incomes elsewhere. A revolution is in progress in southern agriculture, and industrial growth is changing the pattern of life in the South. The ill-trained Negro, so long considered an asset in the labor market, is now becoming a liability. Only the most isolated areas are escaping the force of these changes. Yet to many the advance seems painfully slow. At recent rates of progress another half century will elapse before the South overtakes the rest of the country. But those who would build soundly must be patient. Change is the enemy of those who cannot adjust to it, and they resist it. But resistance is mortal, and time is the ally of those who know how to use it.

## II Conclusions

### Foreword

The foregoing remarks, though sketchy, may give you some impression of the mobile attack the Board has made in dealing with various new phases of southern development as they arose. Promoting the development of a region is a bit like taking an ailing elephant upstairs. You help him lift one foot; then you poke him on the other side; you coax him to exert himself and you help him climb a step; then you find a foot trailing; you and he together put it in place so as not to obstruct his progress; then you start with some promising part of his anatomy and go through the procedure all over again in order to maneuver him up another step. To the impetuous person a firecracker would seem to be more effective, but not, I believe, for the peace of mind of the elephant, and it would incur a dangerous risk hardly to be recommended by responsible advisors.

Our Board has dealt with a comparatively simple problem. It has dealt with a part of a united nation, with a common culture, with a people having the same language, few peculiar problems of their own, and general enthusiasm for the economic and cultural advantages which could be brought to them. These conditions differ markedly from those prevailing in many of the undeveloped countries of the world. There you find different languages, different cultures, different religions, different habits and aspirations. Nevertheless, many of the problems are rather similar to those we have encountered in the South. There are the problems of sanitation, health, diet, and human vitality. There is the task of increasing productivity by inducing a desire for greater productivity and introducing more productive methods. There is the task of educating not only leaders but the mass of the people as well, of providing training and skills and of upgrading the effectiveness of the people who can be helped. There is the problem of modifying taboos and customs so that other developments may proceed. There is the problem of preserving local



culture and institutions while adapting them so as to yield larger benefits. I need enumerate no more. With many such problems the Board's experience in the South may not be wholly irrelevant abroad.

Permit me then to conclude these remarks by presenting several conclusions and observations, and possibly a few principles or maxims, which seem to me to be suggested by the Board's experience. I shall report them briefly without intending to seem dogmatic. I remind you that many of these statements are offered more as suggestive hypotheses than as wholly validated principles. They are submitted speculatively in the belief that they may be worthy of consideration by a group like this that is trying to discover methods of helping undeveloped countries. It should be understood that these are my personal conclusions, and they are not presented as representing the conclusions or the official policies of the General Education Board.

1. Forms of aid. Business and loans that are mutually advantageous may be used to foster the development of "backward" areas; so likewise philanthropy and charity may be used. But it is important to use each in its appropriate place. The General Education Board has engaged in philanthropy, not charity. True philanthropy acts on reason to remove causes, rather than on emotion to alleviate distress. It seeks to provide cures, not palliatives - remedies, not relief. It works for enduring improvements that may be perpetuated, rather than transient gains that cannot be maintained.
2. Have a conception of objectives. In setting out to assist the economic and social development of an area, it is important to have for guidance some conception of the long-run and over-all objectives you seek to promote. Those objectives will affect not only what is done, but how it should be done. In this country we respect the sovereignty, the independence and the right of self-determination of other peoples. We believe in human rights, in human dignity and in the right of self-realization for the individual. Hence, when we promote the development of other areas, we cannot with propriety impose our practices, attitudes and culture on a reluctant people. If our objective be their well-being, it must be their well-being, not by our standards of material comfort and social benefits, but well-being by enlightened standards appropriate to their conditions, aspirations, customs and traditions. Our philosophy obliges us to be interested not alone in the development of the material resources of such people, but also in the development and realization of the potentialities of the people themselves. This concern with the development of a capable thriving people necessitates a special approach. For then the objective is not to benefit a people by developing their resources for them, but to assist a people in their efforts to develop their resources and their human capacities for their own benefit. This is essentially what the General Education Board has tried to do for nearly 50 years.



3. To develop people and resources, progress must be made in many directions. In almost no direction can regional self-development proceed very far unless advances are also made in other directions. Health, education and economic life represent three of the most important fields in which advances depend upon the progress of each other. Thus, economic advancement depends on progress in health, in skills and in knowledge; the improvement of health requires rising incomes and a growing knowledge among the people; and educational improvements depend on health and expanding financial resources derived from economic progress. In some ways education is the most important single factor, for, though it is slow in its effect, it affords a place to start, and it is the one means by which a people may lift themselves by their own bootstraps. Yet within each field, and in all of them combined, there will be places where, because progress has failed, bottlenecks will arise; and until these obstacles are removed, progress in broad areas will be checked. Advances in one direction, however, have the happy faculty of assisting progress in another. For example, education tends to increase productivity, and increased productivity and higher incomes facilitate improvements in health, permit improvements in education, and at the same time increase the desire for more education. Thus, progress generates further progress.
  
4. The attack must be made on many fronts. To obtain over-all progress in a region all essential things must somehow be done. The attack therefore must be mobile and directed at whatever fronts require attention. "Do the next thing next," is an old rule in this game. The undertaking is somewhat like jacking up a house: you ratchet one jack up, and then another, and then another, so that the structure will not be thrown out of shape. In a rural society, for example, you may start with agriculture by providing better seed and by demonstrating better methods of cultivation; but next you need to provide for the distribution of food; highways and transport are then required; dietary habits must be changed; education becomes necessary; industry must arise to supply a growing demand for goods; better government must be provided; and so you raise each part at the appropriate time.
  
5. Use strategic approaches. The skill and resources of a region are seldom adequate at any time to carry forward rapid improvements in all fields. In consequence, it is necessary to use strategic approaches. By strategic approaches I mean attacks at critical or strategic points where, with the means in hand, intelligently applied, a break-through can be made that will permit large gains on a broad front. Removing bottlenecks and overcoming obstructions that block the path of normal progress are simple illustrations. But strategic approaches may also be made by farsighted prevention of bottlenecks and obstructions so that costly delays may be avoided. Of even greater importance perhaps is the introduction of improvements that, by unleashing or inciting human effort and by enlarging opportunities or creating new ones, will permit sweeping advances to be made that hasten progress on many fronts.

Such improvements and innovations have a catalytic effect, producing a sort of chain reaction that yields results out of all proportion to the initial effort. The problem is to discover and exploit these trigger improvements, that set large forces in motion. There are countless ways in which help will do some good, but the great problem is to discover the strategic ways in which limited help will do the greatest possible good.

6. The function of the outside benefactor is to assist the self-development of a region. I have suggested that the appropriate objective for us is to assist the self-development of the undeveloped regions we wish to aid. The manner in which we help, however, may greatly influence the progress made. If we assist people who are trying to help themselves, we generate competence and resourcefulness. If we do for people what they should learn to do for themselves we create dependents. More will be accomplished in the end, I believe, by helping a people to develop their country themselves, than by pursuing development programs for them. By aiding their efforts we create responsibility, interest and competence. Moreover, in following such a course, friction is lessened and the results are more enduring. If a people are to live with and maintain a better society, it must be their society, and they must learn to manage it. Thus we can provide technical assistance to those who need it and desire it. At their request we can provide demonstrations in order to arouse interest and encourage the spread of given improvements. We can provide equipment and funds for their projects. We may even do things for them by contract under arrangements in which they take the final responsibility. In some measure we may invest and operate enterprises in their countries, but it is important not to lose sight of the ultimate purpose we have in mind, which is not to exploit a region and its people but to help their development.
7. Work with established institutions and local leaders. Under most circumstances more will be accomplished by working through established institutions, if they are appropriate, than by setting up rival institutions. Likewise, the farsighted local leader who can get things done is the man to help. By aiding local leaders, and by making established institutions more effective, you develop competence, interest and responsibility among those who must carry on. The object is to show not what you can do, but what local people can do. It is important to generate confidence that the undertaking is theirs, not yours. In helping local institutions and local leaders the benefactor must be self-effacing, allow those in charge all honor and credit, and seek no glory for himself. Violation of this rule shifts the blame for failure and the responsibility for success.
8. Assist, but don't take more responsibility than necessary. In aiding local institutions and local leaders, advice is often more helpful than

money. Planting ideas that germinate into enthusiastic effort is more fruitful in the long run than suggesting ready-made programs that make few demands upon local people. Responsibility for planning, for support, and for maintenance of a project generates a basis for its continuation. Limited funds that induce local effort will in the end accomplish more than greater sums that relieve the beneficiaries of responsibility. The aim of those who help should be to make their help unnecessary. Projects that can prove their worth and enlist local support, or which generate their own support are more likely to persist than those which need permanent assistance. Aid should be given so as to encourage full local support as soon as possible. And aid should be withdrawn as rapidly as projects can stand on their own feet, for in this way time and funds are released for other points of attack. There is an old saying in foundation circles that "as soon as they begin to lean on you, it is time to give due notice and pull the crutch." The effect is to develop self-reliance.

9. Let local people change customs and culture. In "backward" countries almost any major change clashes eventually with local customs; and local customs and culture often obstruct beneficial improvements. Customs, attitudes and traditions change slowly. Local leaders can generally accomplish more in changing them by evolution than outsiders can by trying to introduce abruptly new practices and attitudes. In this delicate process local leadership must take the lead, and convince by example and demonstration where argument fails. In the last analysis circumstance is generally more effective than persuasion in changing habits and traditional practices. Time is a necessary ally, and time cannot be hurried.
10. Finally, the process and strategy of development is one that requires infinite goodwill, complete sympathy and understanding, and unlimited patience on the part of those who try to help. Men who want to play God in a hurry have no place in the serious efforts to help disadvantaged people. The zealot, the man with a mission, or the sympathetic helper all have a place, but the man determined to do what God would do if He only had the facts and could shake the stupidity out of "backward" people is a misfit destined to create more disturbance than improvement. This is a mission for devoted men who, in the words of Fred T. Gates, are dedicated "to work without profit or self-acclaim for the benefit of all men."