What's Happening on the International Scene?

By Francis C. Byrnes

Twenty-eight years ago, AAACE was meeting at Mo Ranch in the wilds of Texas. A few months earlier, Ohio State had named me as agricultural editor to succeed J.E. McClintock, who had retired after 31 years in that post. With other retirements, plus resignations and expansions into television, we had five vacancies on the Ohio information staff.

It was my second AAACE meeting, and fully equipped with job descriptions, I came to Mo Ranch seeking candidates. This did little to win friends among the senior editors from the other states. Like mother hens trying to protect their chicks from a marauding hawk, they did their best to keep their outstanding young talent out of sight.

Over the succeeding months, we did get our positions filled, and not always by raids on other states. But what startles me now that I am back in the United States, after some 12 years abroad, is the realization that many of those young people hired for Ohio are themselves now making retirement plans or, in at least two cases, have already retired.

Given the title "What's Happening on the International Scene?" one could talk about any number of things. But the most significant event is the growing recognition that we now live in a globally interdependent world. While we may have once regarded the United States as rather independent and self-sufficient, our country is now seeking an appropriate role and stature in a world of accommoda-

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tion and sharing. What we are sharing is generally in short supply: not only energy, but food, natural resources, and human beings adequately prepared to face the challenge of developing solutions for unique, but pervasive problems.

What does it mean to be globally interdependent?

1. As a nation, we can no longer be isolated socially, culturally, economically or politically from the rest of the world. For instance, we now depend on the developing countries for 45 percent of the oil we use, 85 percent of the bauxite, 93 percent of the zinc ore, and 36 percent of the iron ore. (Reston, 1978)

2. As agriculturalists, our markets, prices and jobs are directly influenced by what happens, particularly in developing countries. Today one of every four American farm jobs, and one of every eight manufacturing jobs, depend on the sale of American goods abroad.

3. As gatherers, processors and disseminators of information, our "beat" is bigger, our audiences are more numerous and diverse, our messages more complex, and our channels of transmission more sophisticated and rapid. We have formidable communication tasks at home and abroad.

It is a situation marked by paradoxes. We can communicate instantly via satellite across oceans and continents, but we are still seeking better ways to listen to, understand, and develop effective communication with millions of people living in rural areas. We have the hardware for instant response and retaliation on an international scale, but we recognize that we have yet to realize our potential in developing the patience and skills for productive, peaceful communication and negotiation.

4. As private citizens, our individual responsibilities are greater: our responsibilities to be aware, to be informed, to seek understanding, to be concerned, and to be prepared to act in appropriate ways. As President Kennedy said in his inaugural address: "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

With this background, I have elected, in the context of this program and this audience, to concentrate on three topics which I hope are of mutual concern:

1. Current perspectives on the projected seriousness of the food and poverty situation in the smaller, poorer countries;

2. Emerging strategies for addressing food and poverty problems, and recent actions in the world-wide technical cooperation community affecting the nature and scope of assistance available for agricultural development in the low-income countries;

3. The opportunities these actions and strategies offer those interested in joining the war on hunger and poverty, either directly

or through your institutions at home or abroad.

The Food and Poverty Situation

It is useful to think of agricultural development in terms of three eras (Wortman, 1976). We are familiar with the **second era**—one based on science and supported by educational institutions, industry and public agencies. Much of the world's temperate-zone agriculture moved into this era in the past 75 years, triggered in the main by World War II demands for food. We introduced new technology at a forced pace.

Circumstances now force the developing countries into a new or **third era** of agricultural development. This era is marked by the necessity to accelerate agricultural production at rates greater than ever experienced in the developed countries—and to do so with limited resources and, in many cases, under unfavorable soil, water, or climatic conditions.

No major progress has yet been made to reduce globally the mounting food deficits of the extremely poorer, less-developed countries, although there have been encouraging gains in many areas, such as India. In 1977, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported food shortages in 23 countries and unfavorable growing conditions in some 40 others. Moreover, hungry people do not have the money to purchase surplus foods, when they exist, whether these come from local farmers, neighboring nations, or distant producers.

Just this past December, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) extended its projections of world grain deficits to 1990 (IFPRI, 1977). The figures are not encouraging.

Under the conditions assumed, IFPRI projected that production of staple foods in deficit countries will fall short of meeting demands in 1990 by 120 to 145 million metric tons. This is more than three times the shortfall of 37 million metric tons in the relatively good production year of 1975.

In the low-income countries, where almost two-thirds of the total population of the developing market economies live, the food deficit is projected to rise from 12 million metric tons in 1975 to nearly 85 million by 1990. Just to maintain consumption at the 1975 per capita level would require 35 million metric tons more than the projected production.

These figures mean that many of the developing countries must double their food crop output within 15 years, some in as few as eight years, if they are not to be dependent upon external sources (if external sources still exist by then) for their politically sensitive basic commodities. If these countries are to develop, they must marshall and manage the contributions of science, education and

industry to raise food production, incomes and standards of living in rural areas. They must not only do this—but provide appropriate synchronization and motivation to sustain accelerated rates of growth.

The rates of increase necessary for most developing countries even to maintain the minimal nutritional levels of today are well above the long-term 1.5 to 2 percent growth rate in agriculture typical of the developed world. To achieve these rates will require exceptional research and development efforts, and such research and development will not be possible unless supported by long-term national commitments and action.

Serious efforts to improve the food and poverty situation must precede, include, and go beyond the issue of producing agricultural commodities. Countries must understand, mobilize, and manage the total food system. If they concentrate on any one component to the neglect of others, they will be disappointed and frustrated.

The total food system deals with matters much broader than agricultural science and farming practices. There are public policy issues of land use, priorities, price supports, and other production incentives. There are the production factors involving biological, chemical, and mechanical technologies, as well as systems to supply inputs, credit, and information. There is the business of making the food available through processing, packaging, and distribution, and of providing people with access to it by increasing their incomes and offering foods in forms which they can process and consume. There is the need for basic education on nutrition so that consumers get maximum use out of the foods they obtain.

But most of the farmers of the world still live and work in the style and tempo of the **first** era of agricultural development. For an estimated 10,000 years people have engaged in a subsistence form of agriculture to supplement the food obtained by hunting and fishing (Reed, 1977).

Primitive systems of crop and animal production slowly evolved. Many still exist, and where they do, we have subsistence farms, low incomes, hungry people ... on farms, in rural areas, and in the cities.

The bulk of the population of the developing countries lives in rural areas: most are small farmers. It is fallacious to assume that these farm families are well fed. While many small farmers produce on a limited scale certain foods such as vegetables, fruits, chickens, and pigs that could enrich their diets in proteins, vitamins and minerals, these goods are usually sold to get the cash to buy medicine, clothes, and other essentials—such as salt.

Another factor influencing the food shortage has been a lack of attention to the problems of marketing and storage. As soon as

production even slightly exceeds the current demand of the people able to buy, prices drop severely. This continues to occur in the developing countries and frustrates efforts to increase supplies on a long-term basis.

Moreover, in the past, the near hysteria associated with a total production deficit frequently has distracted policy-makers from considering the potential of small farmers. They tend to turn to the more capital intensive large production and development schemes.

Emerging Strategies and Support

As the food-poverty situation has developed over the past 30 years, the international technical cooperation community has launched a range of efforts, each based on certain assumptions or strategies.

Early efforts to help the developing world solve its agricultural problems were based on transfers of temperate zone agricultural technology. While this worked well in post-war Europe and other temperate zones, it failed in the tropics. We have also tried to transfer the form and function of our developed-country institutions and, in most cases, they did not fit well into the political, social and organizational contexts in which we attempted to transplant them. We made available large amounts of capital, particularly for industrial development, but benefits failed to trickle down to the rural poor; agricultural yields remained low, and more people became hungry.

More recently, approaches identified with what the world press called the "Green Revolution" demonstrated how new technology, such as the introduction of high yielding varieties of rice, wheat, and to a lesser extent, other cereals can stimulate major changes not only in agricultural productivity but also in our attitudes and beliefs about the readiness and willingness of farmers to change. We saw that even traditional farmers could and would change—and do so rapidly given high yielding varieties, inputs and markets (Ruttan, 1977).

One of the scientists responsible for the new rice varieties, says the term "Green Revolution" was ill-chosen, in that it has "unjustified overtones of magic or miracles—when, in fact, it describes the modification and application of accumulated information developed over past decades in North America, Europe, and Japan to cereal production in the developing countries (Jennings, 1975)."

Concurrent with the Green Revolution have been growing concerns for the small farmer and the importance of meeting basic food requirements and raising incomes. This has brought long overdue attention to and an emphasis on target groups—the

concept that unless a specific portion of the benefits of growth is directed at the poor as an integral part of a country's development strategy, they will continue to be poor—and hungry.

Moreover, it is important that a development strategy is effective not only in shifting resources toward the poorer countries, but also in improving the lot of the poor people. If a development strategy cannot accomplish this latter task, we may rightly ask, as has President Carter: "Why should the poor of the rich countries help the rich of the poor countries?"

Accordingly, most national development efforts are now placing high priority on agriculture and the rural sector. Action typically begins with major efforts to create, develop, or strengthen a developing nation's capacity for agricultural research and development. First priorities go to the country's basic food commodities, and then to those products capable of generating foreign exchange (IADS, 1975).

Next, countries mount national programs to increase the production and productivity of specific food crops, and may, in addition, establish integrated rural development programs in specific geographic areas.

Success of these programs depends upon at least two additional factors. The first of these is synchronization of the public and private sector policies, agencies and activities necessary to support the production drive.

The second factor is of particular concern to agriculturists, communication specialists and social scientists. To an increasing extent, the agricultural technology which is successful and readily adopted is that which is being generated in local environments. In the generation of such technology, the farmer not only participates in the agricultural research, but he, his family, and his community are also studied (Hildebrand, 1977).

While experiment stations and laboratories are still important, this new approach to agricultural research helps ensure that the new technology will be **biologically adapted, economically viable** and **socially acceptable** in the specific setting where it will be used. Having done this, some of the extension effort is accomplished. Attention can be directed to helping stimulate and synchronize the necessary supporting services and to teach other farmers how to use the various elements and practices of the new technology.

Over the past few years, the world-wide technical cooperation community has mobilized massive resources to stimulate accelerated growth in agricultural productivity, increase incomes, and improve standards of living in the rural areas of the developing world. These resources now make possible efforts that dwarf the extensive assistance of previous years. Let us review some of

these:

1. The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, organized in 1975 to mobilize $15 million and provide overall direction for the then five international research centers, is responsible for the funding of nine such centers, plus two related activities. The centers' total operating expenses this year of nearly $90 million are being met by 30 donors. In addition to the United States, these donors include 17 governments, nine international agencies and four foundations (CGIAR, 1976).

2. Recognizing that the most effective technology is that which is developed locally, the Consultative Group is currently considering establishing another organization with the specific mandate to help the developing countries plan, implement and manage their own agricultural research and development programs.

3. International investment banks, including the World Bank and the several regional banks, have increased by several times the amounts of money available to finance agricultural and rural development programs in low income countries.

4. The International Fund for Agricultural Development came into being in late 1977 after having raised more than one billion dollars to be used in grants and loans to help increase agricultural production with particular emphasis on the poorest of the food deficit countries.

5. In the coming year, the U.S. expects to make $610 million available for food and nutrition aid. Of this, $259 million would be allocated to Title XII, with the amount to be spent through universities yet to be determined. In the current year, $45 million of the $195 million in Title XII are being expended to promote and expand the role of U.S. agricultural colleges and universities in helping solve the critical food problems of the developing world on a continuing basis.

6. Meeting in Manila last June, the World Food Council recommended that the international community substantially increase its assistance to achieve at least a 4 percent sustained rate of growth in food production in the developing countries. It is estimated that this would require $8.3 billion (at 1975 prices) on an annual basis, along with a doubling of investment by the food priority countries themselves.

7. The oil-rich, dollar-rich and food-poor OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) countries are seeking technical assistance for agricultural projects. Within the Arab community, three bilateral and four multi-lateral funds now operate (Law, 1978).

These and other actions too numerous to mention here are directed at one or more target groups. The sheer volume of current

activities—official, non-official, public, and private—places a high premium on cooperation and communication among all involved.

Opportunities and Challenges for Editors

Information, in its various forms, is basic to development. Policy makers need information to plan, manage and evaluate programs. Information flow within and among organizations facilitates synchronization and collaboration. Farmers and others need to know what to do, when and how to do it.

Roles of Information in Development. A major task for an information specialist in an international assignment is to determine how he can be most effective, regardless of the job description and organizational position.

An agricultural research and development program has many audiences. Before a change occurs on farms, the improved technology must originate somewhere, be modified to location and other circumstances, be made known to those who will transmit it to farmers and their families, and frequently, be facilitated by technical, financial, and advisory resources.

Communication must stimulate changes in the activities of and in the decision-making criteria used within at least three major groups of people (and their organizations) in each country:

- Scientists who seek answers to the problems of agricultural production.
- Educators, extension workers and production specialists who translate research results into instructional materials and cultural recommendations and bring the information to students, farmers, and others.
- Representatives of supporting agencies (public and private). This group includes those institutions engaged in policymaking and providing technical inputs—irrigation, seeds, fertilizers, and chemicals, for example—and the credit needed. Equally important are those responsible for marketing and transportation facilities, and those who operate the communication media.

Within the communication program, the information specialist outlines specific objectives for the informational activities for each of these groups, **in addition to those for the farmer audience**. The following objectives guide the planning, preparation, and dissemination of materials:

For **scientists and research administrators,** the communication objectives may include

- redefining concepts of and approaches to research, as well as establishing more ambitious, development related goals for research;
- increased awareness of key or newly identified farm problems

requiring research attention;
- developing of or accepting more effective methods of research;
- increased interest and competence in communicating the results of research to those who can help farmers adapt and apply the findings, and
- increased participation with other organizations in cooperative research and information exchange.

For **educational institutions, extension services, agricultural officials in the field,** and similar groups, one of the principal communication objectives relates to the general need to increase the agricultural and communication competence of those responsible for helping farmers to learn new practices. Some agencies may need help in preparing training methods and materials.

Objectives associated with the third group, the **supporting and facilitating** agencies, are as diverse as the public and private operations involved. Some of the objectives to be achieved include
- recognition of the value of empirical research;
- awareness of current research results, along with an understanding of the implications of these for each agency's operations;
- participation in planning, conducting, and evaluating field or applied research plots;
- establishing of manufacturing, procurement, installation, distribution, financing, and related schedules timed to the needs of extension agencies and farmers;
- accurate, timely reporting of research results, practice recommendations and resource availabilities, and
- awareness and understanding of each others' principal goals.

Other important audiences are the members of legislative and political bodies. Also, if church and community leaders are informed, they may cooperate in helping to achieve development goals, and, through them, inform the general public to the extent it has not been reached through other means.

As "old hat" as some of you may believe the foregoing analysis to be, this is the kind of thinking and approach presently missing in most developing countries. Typically, programs and implementing activities are not cast in terms of measurable, definable objectives; the roles of various audiences are not understood; and information efforts are concentrated on farmers.

If he knows what he is doing, and how to go about it, the information specialist can exercise considerable leverage in a technical assistance program.

Kinds of Positions Available. We can classify, for this discussion, the possible positions into three broad categories:
- action posts with ongoing agencies,

- advisory positions in contract missions, and
- temporary teaching or research assignments.

Action agencies and international institutions provide staff positions for professionals concerned with such subjects as publications, public relations, education, mass media, instructional technology, documentation, information storage and retrieval, and library management. In addition, there may be communication specialists, strategists and research workers. The term "information" is being used to cover an ever-widening range of concerns (National Academy of Science, 1977).

While the bulk of the action positions are in the international agencies—such as FAO, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), or World Bank—these organizations give country of citizenship high priority in their hiring criteria. While it is possible for a citizen of the United States to get a position, a person from a developing country—perhaps someone trained at a college of agriculture in the United States—has a better chance.

The international agricultural research centers do not have such constraints. They generally seek experienced editors with a background in agricultural or biological science. While preferred, advanced degrees are not mandatory. When unable to fill some of their posts on a continuing basis, several of the centers have kept their information programs going with a temporary staff on one-year assignments.

Many AAACE members have obtained their first international experience as members of university contract teams. This opportunity still exists and, under Title XII, is likely to expand. Such assignments usually cast editors in the dual role of advisers and doers, with emphasis on developing and leaving behind an operating organization and staff. In such assignments, one is likely to be working on information programs for farmers as well as on communication problems within the organization.

Finally, there are opportunities each year to go abroad as a professor or research worker in an academic program, either under Fulbright-Hayes auspices or other arrangements. The Council for International Exchange of Scholars lists Fulbright-Hayes posts in mass communication and journalism in 16 countries for the 1979-80 academic year (Council for International Exchange of Scholars, 1978).

Kinds of Information Work Involved. There is no practical limit to the kinds of informational activities appropriate in the developing countries. The limits usually are those imposed by the experience, qualifications, and willingness of the person involved. High in priority are the needs to select and train locals on the job, and to help the organization plan and establish internal and external

communication systems.

Beyond this, he may draw upon all of the personal, group, and mass media methods. Anyone who has worked as the only information person on a staff abroad has undertaken many tasks to get things started and to keep them going.

General Qualifications Needed. Obviously, it is not possible to recruit communication super-stars; so what general qualifications are most relevant? Unless it is for a specific skill post, e.g., photographer, international centers and university mission directors usually seek information generalists. They want good writers and editors with the ability to organize material and their own operations. They seek agricultural generalists; hence a background in agricultural or biological science is desired.

Some organizations want persons with knowledge of and research competence in communication as a social process; this is important in posts where communication strategies are to be developed and implemented, or if programs are to be evaluated.

While ability as a teacher, trainer and adviser is important, some people who lack the experience but have the necessary aptitudes and patience are quite successful.

Familiarity with the communication media, the techniques involved and the basic equipment is important; if you don't know, you need to know where you can rapidly get the answers you need.

Most important of all is the ability to improvise and adapt—professionally, personally, and with respect to administrative arrangements (Byrnes, 1966). The actual role you find yourself performing never matches either what was described or expected; the working situation may be better or worse, and likewise, the living arrangements, the take-home pay and the fringe benefits. You may not recognize or reap some of the rewards until you return home.

How to Enter the Field. One gets involved in international agricultural activities largely as the result of one's own initiative. You must make yourself and your interests known and visible, not just in one place, but in many. Some of the things one might do would include these:

1. Become familiar, through their reports, with the work of the major international organizations and other entities working in agricultural development. Write to the appropriate offices of those in which you are interested; tell them about yourself and your desire to explore international employment opportunities; include a complete but concise resume.

2. Write to the directors of the international agricultural research centers, either applying for a position or inquiring into the possibility or a short-term assignment.

3. Keep abreast of the international developments in your own

university and of the consortium in which it may be a member. Know what is being planned for university involvement under Title XII and in other ways.

4. Develop a long range personal plan for future involvement in a particular country or area; study the language; take courses about the country and in supporting fields such as sociology, economics, anthropology and development.

5. Communicate with those who administer the Fulbright program so that you may know, well in advance, of opportunities in that area.

6. Register with such international personnel directories as you can identify. IADS operates one, and we are identifying and developing linkages with others.

7. Finally, encourage increased attention within AAACE to identify opportunities and maintain a directory of those interested. The 1970 directory was an excellent idea, but it needs to be brought up-to-date and probably expanded (AAACE, 1970). Moreover, such a document deserves wide circulation.

Although there were many times during the past 12 years when I was recruiting editors for posts at one or more of the international centers, no one ever brought this directory to my attention, including the members of AAACE through whom I carried out much of the recruiting. Where has it been? This, in itself, would be a good case study of the problems of effective communication.

Looking to the Future. I firmly believe that opportunities in international agricultural development will increase for people such as ourselves. This is true even though the numbers of foreign nationals with the appropriate capabilities are constantly growing, for few of them are in the smaller, poorer countries where the major programs will be launched.

Opportunities for and the attendant success of information specialists in development will be related directly to the extent that:

1. Administrators of assistance agencies and developing countries recognize information as an essential ingredient in development.

2. Information specialists and social scientists are involved directly in program and project design.

3. Competent people can be recruited to fill the information posts created, and

4. Those so assigned turn in a professional performance above and beyond expectations.

If this happens, the resulting success will generate new opportunities for those who succeed and create additional ones for others.

But it is important to remember that we are engaged in technical assistance and cooperation. The basic mission is to help these countries and their people help themselves. They expect us to help them solve the problems of today, but, more importantly, to prepare them to cope with the issues of tomorrow. We have our country; they have theirs. In the end, development is too important a process for them to leave it in the hands of expatriates. We must not deprive them of their responsibilities nor allow them to transfer them to us.

If you never seek or wish a job in international agricultural communication, you still have many opportunities—yes, even the responsibility—to become knowledgeable and to keep current about the world food and poverty situation; to understand its implications for the United States; and to communicate about it effectively and widely—both professionally and personally.

In a globally interdependent world it is extremely important that its citizens remain well informed. There is a communication job at home as well as abroad; and there are opportunities for you to take the initiative.

Yet, as Thomas Griffith points out in a recent **Time** essay, "the premature boredom of American newspaper editors is most acute in the area of foreign news. They assume that Americans are weary of unsolvable problems in unpronounceable places. The foreign correspondent is now an endangered species. The only newspapers with more than a handful of staffers abroad are the **New York Times,** the **Washington Post** and the **Los Angeles Times**....The result is to confine the reporting of world news to too small a group—to the perceptions, the industry, the imagination and the availability of a shrinking band of reporters (Griffith, 1978).

Finally, he asks: "How are you going to discover interesting news if you're not out there looking?"

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