

TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL REMARKS
before the
PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON WORLD HUNGER
Sub-Committee on Public Participation and Communication

by

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Thank you Mr. Chairman, Members of the Sub-Committee and Members of the General Public.

My name is Sam Hanson. I am an attorney in private practice in Congressman Nolan's great State of Minnesota and am one of several hundred volunteers who donate their time for the work of the Institute of Cultural Affairs. I would like to make my oral statement in the form as suggested by the questions of Mr. Denver: What is the purpose of the Institute of Cultural Affairs; what have been its major successes and failures; and, with respect to those failures, what do we believe would have made the difference.

The context for describing the purpose of the Institute of Cultural Affairs would begin something like this: We believe that the only solution to world hunger, as well as to other critical social ills which face our age, is the development of local self-sufficiency on a massive scale. The desirability of this solution is certainly not new and would likely be agreed to by everyone, but it has been perhaps considered an unachievable, idealistic goal. We believe that what is new in our times, and what makes this solution achievable, is a new awareness of the nature of the contradictions that have in the past prevented local self-sufficiency. It is our view that the contradiction is not lack of resources but poor utilization and distribution of resources. The contradiction is not lack of technology but poor delivery of appropriate technology to the local level. Most importantly, and a matter upon which participants in our organization have staked their lives, the contradiction is not a lack of the capacity or desire on the part of local people to accomplish their own development and establish their own self-sufficiency. We believe that the capacity and desire exist and that what lies behind the appearance of incapacity or lack of care is instead the existence of unnecessary barriers to participation of local people in both planning and the implementation of their own development; barriers imposed by traditions of separation and disunity, barriers imposed by patterns of uncooperative efforts (particularly intensified in a subsistence or survival economy) and barriers resulting from the atrophy of self-help skills due to lack of opportunity to exercise them.

Together with this new awareness of the underlying contradiction there is also a new consciousness of our unique moment in history which has occasioned a resurgence of local initiative. This resurgence is global in scale but is in an infant stage. In my romantic moments I would like to believe that the opportunity for local development which is presented by the current mood of local initiative will be available forever, that we have reached some permanent plateau in the development of society. I am afraid, however, that history will prove

this wrong; that the current resurgence in local community is a transient phenomenon and will dissipate itself, because people will become impatient with the nuisance of dealing with the added complexity of building consensus, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that local initiative can be practically done on a significant scale across the world. The purpose of the Institute of Cultural Affairs is to catalyze that demonstration of local people creating their own development out of their own resources.

In order to position itself to be able to catalyze that demonstration the Institute of Cultural Affairs has organized itself as an international body, operating out of offices in 103 cities and registered in over 20 countries. Its full time staff of approximately 2,000 members (40% American and 60% non-American) is supplemented by an effective and substantial volunteer force, which is the backbone of its programs.

The programs which have evolved in the effort to create this demonstration are held in three main program divisions:

(1) Community Forums

Community forums have been offered by the Institute of Cultural Affairs in some 27 countries. They are open, grassroots planning forums intended to draw together the community, to initiate grassroots planning and to create an experience of unity and cooperation. This program was initiated in the United States and in the past three years over 4,500 communities have participated, at least one in every county of this nation.

(2) Social Demonstrations

Social demonstration projects have been initiated in 28 countries. Unlike the community forums which are available to a broad geography, a social demonstration project is done with a selected community and is aimed at obtaining rapid social and economic development and, in so doing, creating a demonstration of what is possible for local people to accomplish with their own resources. Over 70 such projects are now in being, with many more being added regularly by a special program in India which I will mention in a moment. The communities where these projects are conducted are selected on the basis of being in the most dire need for development in the particular area that they represent, so that the accomplishment of rapid social and economic development will have a major impact on a much larger area.

These projects are begun by a local plan created by the local people in consultation with our staff and other outside technical experts which are made available to them. The local plan covers a four year development effort and members of the ICA staff live in the community for at least the first two years to assist local people in the implementation of their plan.

(3)

Special Programs

Special programs have been developed to share insights gained as workers in the field of human development across the world. They include seminars in planning methodology and social responsibility offered to corporations, community organizations and government agencies as well as special focus forums designed to reimagine the role in society of women and youth.

The program arena perhaps most relevant to our discussion is social demonstration. In past years our organization spent considerable time analyzing the problem of local development. In the midst of one of those analytical sessions someone posted on the wall a quotation which went something like this: "Action removes the doubt which theory cannot solve". We were inspired to pick up our anxieties relative to unanswered questions and to get out in the field, where we discovered that local people were not only capable of doing their own development, they would also teach us everything we needed to know to get it done.

We have forced ourselves to measure success in very concrete, mundane terms. For example, while waiting to speak I pulled some data from a recent evaluation that was done of social demonstration projects in India. That data relates to agricultural development in a small village in the State of Maharashtra known as Maliwada. The evaluation shows that in about a one year period the amount of cultivated land went from 356 acres to 625 acres. This was accomplished by increasing water availability through rebuilding four dams which had not adequately functioned for centuries, drilling seven new wells and obtaining 25 electric pumps. In addition there was the acquisition of a tractor and new bullock teams which were crucial to the effort, together with the use of hybrid seeds and fertilizers. The impact of these mundane activities was that the net business income across the community from agricultural activities went from \$35,000 a year to \$108,000 a year. Importantly, the development was financed by loans to local farmers and, those loans are being paid back.

The chief minister of the State of Maharashtra came out to visit this village of Maliwada. He told us that the work that had been

done in Maliwada was fantastic, but then added:

"In the State of Maharashtra alone there are 35,000 villages like Maliwada. One development project such as Maliwada in the face of those villages can only be a curiosity."

When the blood had returned to our faces we sat down with the chief minister and began to work out a plan for the intentional and systematic replication of the Maliwada development project throughout the State of Maharashtra. That plan called for the establishment of four additional projects, one in each major division of the state, immediately; 25 additional villages or one in every district of the state were added the next year; and by June of 1979 we intend to have 232 villages participating, being equivalent to one in every county of the state.

Central to our ability to do replication was the establishment of a human development training school in the demonstration village of Maliwada. Other villages which become interested in the Maliwada development effort visit Maliwada, meet with the local people to hear first hand what the effort has meant to their village and then decide if they want to participate. A village that decides to participate is then required to send 10 of its villagers to an intensive training school, on the job, in Maliwada. At the end of that training school it was contemplated that those ten villagers would go back to their village and become a part of the staff to initiate the project there. Many of the villagers attending the school discovered, however, that the situation they were dealing with was far beyond their village and therefore volunteered to be assigned to any village where they were needed.

Since this work is all in the nature of invention and experimentation, we generally do not talk in terms of failures, but we clearly have had our share of learning experiences. Over the years I would describe those experiences in three broad categories:

- (1) Wherever we have attempted to implement solutions that were too narrow, failing to deal comprehensively with the real contradictions, we have found the solutions ineffective. Thus early in our history we discovered that you could not treat systemic problems of any community in isolation. You have to look at the entire community comprehensively, dealing with both the social and economic at the same time and dealing significantly with a recapturing of the latent human resources. Thus we learned that the social demonstration projects need to be done through the approach of working

in a delimited geography where all of the problems can be addressed and all of the people can be involved.

- (2) Attempting to deal with too large a geography or too great a population base stands in the way of creating a rapid demonstration. We have found, for example, that comprehensive development in high density urban areas becomes a protracted campaign when the area selected is too large or cannot be isolated from the influence of surrounding areas.
- (3) Another contradiction to rapid implementation, which we believe central to any hope that the project be a demonstration of dramatic change, is the difficulty in linking up delivery systems rapidly enough to the local villages. This includes such things as obtaining necessary public facilities (electricity, sewer and water) and obtaining adequate working capital for the initiation of new businesses. The critical gap in development efforts around the world is in the delivery to the local community of resources that are available on a national or regional level.

Out of this context I would like to simply summarize the five strategies which we have recommended be priorities of this commission:

- (1) Self-Sufficiency at the Local Level
Effective dealing with the issue of hunger and all of the other related issues requires the stimulation of self-sufficiency at the local level. While there is a role for top down development, as indicated previously, the critical gap in our day is delivery to the local of adequate resources, training and incentives to stimulate development from the ground up.
- (2) Community Organization
Crucial to the development of local self-sufficiency is a creation of local community organizations, which provide the structure to sustain the motivation and build the cooperation necessary for success.
- (3) Comprehensiveness
The problem must be approached comprehensively. Hunger cannot be treated in isolation. It is a systemic matter, involving all of the economic, social and human aspects of every community.
- (4) Appropriate Technology
Delivery of appropriate technology to appropriate communities is essential.

- (5) Public and Private Collaboration
This effort must be a joint effort between the public and private sectors, between nations and between government and local community organizations. The private sector has access to local communities which may not be available to our government and yet our government has an interest in providing support for replicable development efforts which can provide benefits to a broad number of the targeted population.