

REPORT ON THE CLOSING OF THE DELHI PLENARY

Walters: The key to having 55 nations come together who have never had any association with each other at this kind of event was the team dynamic. It took a while for the teams to really begin to become teams. But after the symposium, when they had first begun to get acquainted with each other, see each other's projects, talk about what they had been doing in their work around the world and in rural symposiums, getting them out into the field visits was the point at which they really had the opportunity to become a team. In a lot of these field visits things happened that people are still reeling from. When they came back from these field visits they were very high and very excited and even now, four days later, it is still a major topic of conversation; that is, what happened on the field visits--what they learned, the way in which they encountered themselves in relationship to the projects and to India, and the way India hosted them, greeted them, cared for them in the villages. In some villages people stayed in people's homes, and they were hosted in many different kinds of ways.

We believe, according to our press people here, that there was press coverage either on site or following every one of the 31 projects that were visited. It really was good press coverage, with interviews and good stories in all of the various language newspapers that these projects represented. People began to find a way to describe for themselves what it meant to be about local rural development around the world, the more they talked about the new tractor and participation at the local level as the key to their own experience. Many people who are what you might call professional conference goers or people who work in professional roles in development found themselves, I think, deeply excited by the whole new edge that was brought to their thinking by being in an event that was dominated by local practitioners.

At the closing today--a lot of things began to come together in this event. One thing that began to come together was that for the last four days people have been working on the context of creating a book that would be a statement on what they've learned, and what they have to deal with in the world, and the content of that book is going to be, I think, an astounding statement of what rural development is and what therefore needs to happen in the future. But it all finally boils down to the human factor and people are very clear about that, I believe, as the key to the future.

We were ourselves shocked, and then I think everyone here was shocked, at the number of real local practitioners who came from so many nations. The first shock, of course, hit us with the exhibits when they first went up, the first day. But that has continued the more people have talked and worked together, and then the last two days people who hadn't said anything for the first eight days began to get their voices out and their stories out and their experience out and discover themselves to be genuine contributors to this whole task of the future.

Another journey of this conference has been in the methods. As we've worked on methods over the years, we've always known that what our methods are about are working with people and that the content is in the first instance secondary. That you're out to create a human event and that your

methodologies must be shaped according to the group you've got in order to cause that human event to occur.

We found people both excited by the fact that this conference was a radically different kind of conference than any they had ever been to or ever heard of, and excited about the fact that they needed a way to participate in shaping the direction of the conference, and so we found people volunteering to stay and work on the methods and procedures, which was terrific and an exciting event for us. Many of them had things that they thought were difficulties for the group in terms of accomplishing the objectives of the conference and as they started to work on it, began to find themselves creating and inventing methods that are not only for bringing this event off, but, David McCleskey says, are key to how any event of this nature might be done in the future. And so the whole thing just turned into a great demonstration of what local participation might look like in any dimension in the process of doing this conference and in the process of creating its products.

Some of the new demands and opportunities that we see coming toward us are in things like a short talk today that Bernie Woods of World Bank delivered to the group, in which he indicated to the whole group gathered that the burden was on them to insure that the real impact of what they had done in the Exposition, in Phase I and II, got carried out in Phase III, and that it had to be an impact in many different dimensions. He expressed deep appreciation that he had had the opportunity to participate in this and indicated his commitment to do the kind of role that he could play in the sort of position that he is in to insure that the results of this event have the maximum impact on organizations and agencies like the World Bank who are in the midst of reconsidering their priorities and looking towards this event as one that would give them signals for how they can be operating in the future in relation to local rural development. So I think we all sensed in the whole nature of the closing event, today, that people were leaving here ready to go back to their nations, to where they had come from, to work in depth on implementing the kind of things that they had decided needed to occur.

The press crew reports that the press conference this afternoon, which concluded about an hour ago, had over 30 people at it, and that there looks like there will be a number of feature articles coming out in a variety of magazines, newspapers, and other publications. The business press is one in which we expect a number of feature articles, such as the Business Standard, the Economic Times, The Financial Times, Business Weekly--all Indian publications. That from the international dimension, there have been around 50 interviews from BBC, ABC, Voice of America, UPI, AP, Reuters, The Los Angeles Times, The Chicago Sun Times, and the U.S. Information Service magazine Span here in New Delhi, all of which have been with local people here in the projects.

Our own video crew reports that they have now 20 hours of video and six hours of interviews toward making the film that will come out of this event, and if in Chicago somewhere you can find a PAL system for screening, not editing, but just screening, just as soon as they get back with that, you can start looking at it and beginning to think about how this film gets finally created.

We are looking at the doing of this book as a rather major venture in terms of another demand on us in the future. The whole conference had generated a tremendous amount of input on both the shape of it, how it should be organized in order to be useful and have a great impact, and so I think we are going to have a tremendous time figuring out how this book actually gets created and used in the future.

I think that's sort of the end of what we've been able to draw together this afternoon. So I'll turn it back to whoever's there.

Q: Who did the sendout?

George Walters: The sendout today, the closing address, was done by a project leader from a rather small local project here in India in Karnataka, a man by the name of Father Joe Mary Lobo. It's a project that only had about 15 staff persons and its primary work is in the area of women's development. The group was extremely addressed and excited to have one of their own members stand up and do the closing address as a symbol of what the future is relative to local development.

Q: What has been the reaction of the co-sponsors?

George Walters: The co-sponsors' initial reaction is that they are very pleased. They've not participated at all points in this as much as we had hoped, in various ways, but they--the UN Agencies here, I believe all of them--have had representatives here as direct participants as well as projects that they have sponsored and delegates that they have sponsored and I think that the impact for them has been exceedingly good, and the real impact and response will come very soon, but I think it's going to be very positive and they are going to be quite pleased around the world.

Q: Which of the U.S. delegates is coming back the strongest?

George Walters: That's really hard to say. I know I've not really gotten to know all of them. I know some that have really impressed me. One is a man by the name of Vann Cunningham, and he was sort of the leader of the group that put together the U. S. delegates' report in terms of their report on the impact and significance of this event and he was very proudly seeing that it got distributed today. I think there are a number of them that are very strong across the country, but I was quite impacted with the type of leadership role that he exhibited.

Q: What country really surprised them with its breakthrough in rural development?

George Walters: I think that for the delegates it would have to be India itself. I don't know if that's just because of the amount of rural documentation that has been done here or what, but I think many of the delegates would say they were shocked both at the breakthroughs in India and at the tremendous work that's going on here, the tremendous commitment and capabilities, and the variety of projects and organizations that they encountered here in the field visits. I think it is safe to say that we were

not surprised by that as long as we have worked here as compared with other places. Our work has been a laboratory, experimenting with development ourselves to get to the point where we were ready to have the kind of experience and interchange that we are doing today in many countries, and now that that is happening probably many people would report that the country they are in is the one that surprises them.

Q: What are you guys going to do tomorrow?

George Walters: Well, we thought we'd sleep late. We are starting at nine o'clock in the morning. We have a meeting of all of us to ensure that we have the kind of hosting care for all of these delegates as they leave here, as their departures are spread out over about three days, and also to do our final prep for the M.F.T.F. that starts Sunday.

Phil Townley: George, we are about to tip up our champagne glasses and make some toasts. What toast would you like us to lead off with?

George Walters: Well, I had a closing comment I wanted to make to all of you, but really not only all of you but every one of our houses around the world. It has been an image for me the last few years that this event, when it occurred, would be something like a space capsule and what we all know about space capsules is that they are small and you can only squeeze so many people into them, and Bernie Woods made the comment today that there were hundreds of people at the World Bank who were envious of the fact that he was the one to be at this event. I think we've all been aware that there are thousands of people around the world who we wish were here, and we know that this event could not have possibly occurred without all the work that's gone on in every country by every one of our offices and all the people in communities that made it possible. In one sense when you are out in a space capsule, there is a great dependency on that ground force that you are returning to, and we're all looking forward to the return as much as we were to the event. And so tonight, one of our toasts at our celebration is going to be to the thousands and thousands of people around the world who made this possible.

Phil Townley: Thank you, George.

Chinex: Hear, hear!

Phil Townley: All right George, we are going to say goodbye.

George Walters: All right, take care!