

Discussion of

New Dimensions and Potentials for AID-University Cooperation

Kenneth C. Nobe

Our session chairman, Dr. Roger Fox, made an excellent choice in asking Dr. Lehman Fletcher to speak to us on the subject of new dimensions and potentials for AID-University cooperation. Dr. Fletcher has responded to this invitation by preparing an excellent and comprehensive paper dealing with emerging development programs within AID in which university faculty, particularly those within the agricultural economics discipline, will have many opportunities to participate. Dr. Fletcher has had the unique advantage of being able to view these prospects from three professional vantage points — as a university professor, as a former AID employee who was directly involved in developing new directions and opportunities for university participation in economic development efforts, and now as a member of a prestigious research foundation. He thus speaks as an acknowledged authority on this subject and in my view has carried out his assignment exceedingly well.

In the early part of his paper, Dr. Fletcher provided a useful historical review of the status of AID-university relations during the early 1970's. During this period, while AID personnel ceilings were being cut and (except for specific overseas university contracts and a few 211-d on-campus research efforts) the universities were marking time, two major new AID programs were being developed. The effort of broadest scope emerged as part of the International Development and Food Assistance Act of 1975 (PL 94-161). This Act made substantial changes in State Department foreign programs by amending the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act — particularly the Famine Prevention and Freedom from Hunger Amendment which appears as Title XII in PL 94-161. The other major program that has emerged during the last year, and one in which Dr. Fletcher was a most

Kenneth C. Nobe is Chairman, Department of Economics, Colorado State University, Fort Collins.

active participant, is the Expanded Program of Economic Analysis for Agricultural and Rural Development. It has emerged as a focal point in the Office of Agriculture of the Technical Assistance Bureau. Dr. Fletcher has outlined for us the objectives and implications for university involvement in these two new programs. I will comment briefly on both of them.

In regard to expectations for university involvement under the new International Development and Food Assistance Act, I choose not to quarrel with what Dr. Fletcher had to say. Rather I hope to fill in some gaps that will reflect potential concerns for university-based agricultural economists in those areas that he did not touch on. As he points out in his paper, Title XII of PL 94-161 is very broad — so broad in fact that it now includes all of AID's programs in the general fields of agricultural development and nutrition, with particular emphasis on research and technical assistance. He could have underscored the scope of its broad involvement even more by including the stated purpose of Title XII, which is as follows:

The Congress declares that, in order to prevent famine and establish freedom from hunger, the United States should strengthen the capacities of the United States land-grant and other eligible universities in program-related agricultural institutional development and research . . . , should improve their participation in the United States Government's international efforts to apply more effective agricultural sciences to the goal of increasing world food production, and in general should provide increased and longer term support to the application of science to solving food and nutritional problems of the developing countries.

Dr. Fletcher explains in his paper how the legislation will permit AID to seek direct involvement of U.S. land-grant universities in this broad based development effort. Perhaps because Dr. Fletcher has been away from his home campus too long, I

found that in this phase of his paper his analysis reflected more of what AID hopes will be than what may really be the case at the local university level. In this regard, I do not have the same optimistic view that Title XII will legitimize university involvement in overseas development programs, particularly as perceived by state legislatures and university governing boards. Further, he did not comment on the fact that in the event that more direct university involvement in AID programs does emerge, large scale participation by agricultural economists in such efforts will not automatically occur. I have three specific points I want to make in regard to these concerns.

First. As I understand the overall intent of PL 94-161, it has a much broader and potentially more significant purpose than to merely solicit university involvement in U.S. agricultural development programs — it was intended to separate funding and administration of U.S. economic development programs from military assistance programs. If this objective is achieved, then perhaps we will find many more faculty on university campuses willing to participate in AID development programs, governing boards will more likely sanction such efforts, and state legislatures may even provide some matching experiment station budget support. But I believe that, in their efforts to legitimize broader involvement of university faculty in U.S. economic development programs, university and AID administrators would get more mileage out of publicizing the overall objective of PL 94-161 than by focusing solely on the more narrow objectives of Title XII. Faculty in particular would be more receptive to such efforts if they knew that selection of specific development programs will be tied more closely to needs of people in developing countries than if dominated by political expediency, as in the past. I think that the members of university governing boards and state legislatures, who at least in the west tend to hold extremely conservative views on these matters, would also be more likely to respond in a positive manner. In summary, I think we have a difficult selling job on our hands so we should use all the arguments available to us.

Second. Almost every assessment of the implications of Title XII on university programs that I have seen tends to take its contents out of context

and thus out of perspective, relative to the total content of PL 94-161. Dr. Fletcher's treatment of Title XII in his paper is no exception. However, I deem it crucial to recognize that Title XII deals with only one important area of international economic development. Other sections of the Act which are of critical importance to U.S. international development efforts, and to which agricultural economists can make meaningful contributions, include Title I (international Disaster Assistance), Title II (Food Aid to Poor Countries) and Title III (Development Assistance).

Section 103A of Title III is of particular importance to members of the agricultural economics profession because of the way it defines the agricultural sciences that may be involved in research to be carried out under Title XII and other relevant parts of PL 94-161. While most university administrators at the experiment station and college of agriculture level tend to think of agricultural sciences relevant to worldwide food production as consisting primarily of agronomy and animal sciences, Section 103A makes it clear that economics and the sister social sciences are not to be excluded.

It states:

Agricultural research carried out under this Act shall (1) take account of the special needs of small farmers in the determination of research priorities, (2) *include research on the interrelationships among technology, institutions, and economic, social, and cultural factors affecting small-farm agriculture* (italicized for emphasis), and (3) make extensive use of field testing to adapt basic research to local conditions. Special emphasis shall be placed on disseminating research results to the farms on which they can be put to use, and especially on institutional and other arrangements needed to insure that small farmers have effective access to both new and existing improved technology.

In my view, the range of potential involvement of agricultural economists in AID-university development programs is unduly constrained by Title XII, particularly when it is taken out of context and viewed separately from the other sections of PL 94-161. I strongly urge all interested parties to obtain and digest a complete copy of the Act before they willingly accept the limited type of involvement that reading only Title XII would suggest.

Third. The specifications of Section 103 of Title III notwithstanding, I fear that the normal tendency of land-grant university administrators, as well as many of their AID counterparts, will be to con-

tinue to take Title XII out of context. If I am correct, they will view it as a mandate to limit university research and training capabilities in response to the act primarily to physical, biological, and engineering aspects of the agricultural sciences. Even if Dr. Cliff Wharton is appointed as Chairman of the Board of International Food and Agricultural Development (which is to advise on administration of Title XII programs), I doubt if the physical and biological sciences bias of university and AID administrators will be altered significantly. My pessimism is based on observing that so-called major changes in AID-university relationships in the past, including the 211-d program, did not alter the status quo very much. I expect that most land-grant universities will continue to respond to the Title XII program with a "business as usual" attitude. Therefore, unless we in our profession make sure that administrators on our respective campuses are made fully aware that Title II, Section 103A of the Act specifically calls upon agricultural economists and sister social scientists to be involved in research efforts carried out in support of Title XII programs, we will not likely be invited to participate to any significant degree.

Dr. Fletcher's treatment in his paper of AID's new Expanded Program of Economic Analysis for Agricultural and Rural Development was extremely comprehensive and, in my view, properly optimistic. If this program is successfully implemented, Dr. Fletcher can take a large measure of credit because he was one of the small group within AID responsible for developing it. I recall a meeting called by AID in Chicago, in late 1973, in which Dr. Fletcher and his colleagues in the Office of Agriculture brought this proposal to the attention of a small group of university-based agricultural economists. Several of you participated in that meeting, as well as in a follow-up meeting held in Washington, last January, in which a formal request was made for Expanded Program proposals from university departments of agricultural economics and economics. A large number of states included in WAEA's sphere of influence responded by submitting formal proposals and three of the first half-dozen AID cooperative agreements initiated under the Expanded Programs are with universities who are active in our association.

Although Dr. Fletcher did address his remarks specifically to the manner in which the Expanded Program is being implemented, a few follow-up re-

marks on my part seem appropriate. As he pointed out, the implementation is being accomplished via use of basic memoranda of understanding and cooperative agreements to be signed by AID and the individual participating universities. This approach, while unique to AID, has long been in use by agencies within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, notably the Economic Research Service. A number of ERS/university agreements are presently in effect in the Western States so many of you are fully familiar with them. The use of this approach has been strongly supported by Dr. Leon Hesser, Director of the Office of Agriculture in AID who, I understand, was once employed as a graduate student under a USDA/university cooperative agreement at Purdue. But let us not forget that the basic cooperative agreement is not a funding document. Unless such an agreement is followed by a specific funding contract, it will not lead to greater AID/university-based agricultural development of economics-oriented research.

There is a related area of concern in that many of us in the agricultural economics profession initially viewed the Expanded Program as providing a 211-d type program exclusively for the members of our profession. This could occur, but in my view, it would be a mistake. Successful economic development efforts, by necessity, require a multidisciplinary input. Unless we make a strong effort to tie our involvement under the Expanded Program to Title XII and other university-wide based programs, we could find ourselves isolated from the mainstream of AID-university programs. Everyone involved would be losers under such a scenario and it should therefore be avoided if at all possible.

In closing my discussion of Dr. Fletcher's paper, I wish to thank him for bringing a note of optimism to us about the prospects for greater future AID-university joint programs, particularly those with greater input from agricultural economists. I think, however, that he has left us with an unfinished agenda for future discussions and for implementation programs. Nonetheless our professional colleagues within AID, such as Dr. Fletcher, have served us well in pointing the agency toward new directions more conducive to university involvement. But the ball is now in our court. As we proceed to move to activation of these new AID programs at the university level, I hope that some of the items of concern that I have expressed will appear on the agenda.