

Recommendations Concerning Agricultural School
at De Blao, Vietnam

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Deans Muelder and Cowden visited Vietnam the week of January 24, 1955 at the request of the Washington Office of F.O.A.

The main purpose of this mission was to determine if Michigan State College had an interest in considering a contract, or an addition to the proposed contract, to provide for technical aid in establishing an agricultural college at De Blao, Vietnam.

Their recommendations are as follows:

1. That the School of Agriculture of Michigan State College should not formally participate in the establishment of the proposed agricultural university (or school) at De Blao, Vietnam.
2. That no attempt be made to have the school at De Blao be regarded as a university or college.
3. That since commitments have been made to the Department of Agriculture of the Vietnam government concerning this school, it should be regarded as a vocational agriculture high school, or at most not more than a place to do post-high school work.
4. That a man be hired by the Agricultural Section of F.O.A. to work with the local people on this project. This man should be a vocational agriculture teacher. We will do what we can to recommend to F.O.A. some individuals to be considered for such an assignment.

5. That any advanced university training in agriculture should be a part of a university rather than established separately. Care should be taken not to develop vested interest in the department of agriculture that would prevent the establishment of a coordinated educational institution of higher learning.
6. If and when such a university is in the process of being developed, Michigan State College will be glad to reconsider at that time its position in regard to agricultural assistance. Any MSC work in agriculture should be a part of the MSC mission.
7. In the meantime, F.O.A. should continue to send students to foreign universities such as in the Philippines, Japan, France or the United States for advanced training in agriculture.

Additional Background

(For confidential use of President Hannah and MSC Mission Chief)

Dean Muelder and Dean Cowden were invited to go to Vietnam to determine if Michigan State College had an interest in negotiating a contract with F.O.A. concerning the establishment of an agricultural school of higher learning in Vietnam. Deans Cowden and Muelder were already in Okinawa on other business.

They found that certain plans were rather far advanced between the F.O.A. Mission and the Department of Agriculture of the Vietnam government. A site had been selected and certain construction started for the new agricultural school. The site at De Blao is about 100 miles north of Saigon, and is in a poor agricultural area. The good agricultural area is south of the city. Messrs. Muelder and Cowden doubt if well-trained native people can be obtained to go there as teachers. They could not recommend a MSC staff member for such a location. The Head of the Agricultural Section of F.O.A. doubted if they could get any of their present staff members to take this location. The buildings are frame and perhaps not too permanent. There is an experiment station with three permanent buildings about two miles from this location. It is the judgment of Deans Muelder and Cowden that the location for this proposed school is not a wise choice.

They conferred with several people in responsible positions, including the department heads in the Vietnam Department of Agriculture. All persons concerned were most helpful and courteous.

It is their judgment that somewhere along the line someone went off on a tangent and made unwise commitments to the local government. This was probably not the present administrators. The local Vietnam

government officials in agriculture have little or no conception of what is involved in establishing an institution of higher learning.

The American personnel have many other responsibilities and not too much appreciation of what is involved in collegiate training.

It appears that some sort of a national university will be established in the not too distant future.

Deans Muelder and Cowden feel that this proposed agricultural school at De Blao should receive a rather low priority in the work of the Agricultural Division of the F.O.A. Mission in Saigon. The rent reduction and land reform program, the farm credit and the extension program should have higher priority.

They took the position that we were invited into Vietnam to see if MSC had an interest in enlarging our present contract to include agriculture, and that we were not over-all advisors. However, they were pressed for their recommendations on the program. With the proper qualifications and (they hope) diplomacy, the Deans told them their feelings. It was felt that both Mr. Schwartz and especially the mission director, Mr. Barrows, were relieved to see some way out of the present situation.