THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Mary Gray

Man's recent accomplishments in technology have led to an even greater need to break through the provincialism of viewpoint which afflicts much of the world. With television and other media giving immediacy to events happening thousands of miles away, we seem to be in the beginning stages of building a world community, or understanding the viewpoint of neighbors who fly a different flag and speak a different language. Utilizing assets at hand and available techniques of education may enable us to develop those perceptions of others which will add a new dimension to our lives. With sufficiently widespread awareness of the need, we may put priority on international programs in our utilization of public funds. At present the tendency of our government representatives, when money choices must be made, has been to cut out budgetary items relating to international education as a luxury or "frill" while maintaining increasingly large defense budgets. The International Education Act of 1965, which many educators saw as the beginning of a new era in America of training for a more mature world viewpoint, was never funded in spite of the beautifully stated objectives which after a decade seem even further from fulfillment. If, as former U.H. President Harlan Cleveland says, the "international frontier" is the next major area to which mankind must look in the solution for survival, and if public funds are not as readily available as they were prior to 1965, then a "grassroots approach" to international problems and public awareness would seem to be one in which all educators could engage. Although this solution may seem slow and even futile at times, it enables positive action with the available resources and the cooperative efforts of people of differing viewpoints, at the same time fostering an appreciation for the difficulties of finding international solutions.

In Hawaii we are all "minorities" and hence there is no way to escape into a completely provincial outlook. Because of our geographical position there have been many historical affirmations of the role which Hawaii could play as a "bridge" between countries of Asia, the Pacific and the West. The Pan-Pacific Union, founded here in 1917 with a charter which reads much like that of later international organizations, was an idealistic citizens' effort which spawned numerous other societies still active today, such as the Pacific Science Association and the Pan-Pacific Southeast Asia Women's Association. The Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, with its active program of conferences and seminars for high school students and teachers, will soon celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. The initiative which led to the founding of the East-West Center came from the dreams and hopes of many of Hawaii's leaders who were able to convince Congress that this was the best location for such an experiment in education. The State Legislature has backed an international viewpoint through funding of the Hawaii International Services Agency which is a part of the Department of Planning and Economic Development. At the University of Hawaii, the Advisory Council on International Relations has a listing of over 700 faculty members with international expertise.

In a review of possible programs which teachers and educators may utilize for themselves or their students, it seems wise to go from least to most costly projects. The suggestions which follow are just that — any educator may make his own applications to the age group which is his particular responsibility.

Displays using advertisements, magazine clippings or old UNICEF Christmas cards can be most attractive and provide a real stimulus to the artwork of the student or the educator. Matchfolders and stamps can provide miniatures of beauty and imagination. Although it is difficult to find materials on all countries for such displays, an appreciation of cultural differences and respect for differing viewpoints can be gained.

Field trips are also relatively inexpensive projects and can be as simple or elaborate as time and transportation permit. In Honolulu three excellent museums provide background on Asian, Pacific, and Western art and culture. Even a walk around most neighborhoods will serve to demonstrate the richness of our architectural heritage. The author can vividly remember a junior high class assignment in a small Midwestern town in which she had to find examples of Greek and Roman architecture. Almost any community can provide such background for the creative teacher.
Ethnic and international cookbooks are easily available and most public libraries have a good selection. International menus are therefore relatively easy to develop. Communities vary in the availability of international restaurants but even small towns now may offer a choice of Chinese, Mexican, or Italian cuisine. Indeed, if we ask for something "purely" American we will be severely limited, and tea and coffee will have to go.

International films may or may not be readily available, depending on the area. In Hawaii the State Public Library and the University of Hawaii collections offer a wide variety of films including travelogs anthropological studies, and specialized topics. Advance planning for reservations is necessary, naturally, but it's a sad commentary that so few of the excellent films are in heavy demand. The creative teacher will also carefully survey the TV-logs and make good international programs a matter of class assignment.

Other articles in this issue have already explained a variety of community services in which the international motif is prominent and in which the link is made creatively with the ethnic heritage. Outside the College of Continuing Education and Community Service, mention might be made of the Cherry Blossom and the Narcissus Festivals sponsored by local Chambers of Commerce. With the diversity of Hawaii's citizenry there are religious organizations representing the major religions of Asia, hence it is possible to study the practices and beliefs of these cultures firsthand.

The United Nations Association, Hawaii Chapter, is relatively small in active membership but fulfills the important function of uniting "town and gown" in concern for international organization and world peace. This year's celebration of UN Week during October involved the cooperation of a wide diversity of groups, thanks to the effective organization of the UN Day Chairman, Michael Murakoshi. The Junior Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Education, international students and the Travel Industry Management Club at the University, the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, and the Food Services Executives Association reflect the variety of sponsorship of events.

In every community there are many who have had international experience and who are willing to share their insights with no larger reward than a sincerely expressed "thank you." The recently returned traveler may have an excellent series of slides which he may be willing to edit for presentation to a special audience. The former Peace Corps Volunteer will usually have valuable insights into a less widely known culture. Retired Foreign Service Officers are to be found in many communities. While military service does not necessarily give time for study of the culture in which one is assigned, many peacetime military men and women have taken the time to study the language and history of the area in which they served and are not to be overlooked.

The international short-term visitor is a source of rare knowledge about his own country. Most such visitors are sponsored by some agency of the American government, by a foreign government, or by a private foundation or organization, to visit the United States for a specific purpose. In connection with that purpose, the visitors travel widely and stay in each locale for several days. Professional appointments and home hospitality are provided through the National Council for Community Services to International Visitors (COSERV) which is a voluntary organization with branches throughout the United States. In Hawaii the State Department Reception Center arranges most such services with the Study Abroad office of CCECS, providing professional meetings with University of Hawaii faculty and, as local COSERV
representative, arranging for other services by sponsors as requested. COSERV members countrywide have learned that the home-hospitality services which they offer provide them with rich insights into international attitudes. One suggestion made by visitors has been that the host family try to learn something about the countries of the visitors in advance—it is embarrassing to try to explain the difference between Burma and Bermuda, as one can imagine. The Government Printing Office publishes "Background Notes" on the countries of the world which are available for 5c for each country, one of the last uses of the nickel in this world of inflation.

Most university communities are fortunate in having international students in their midst, and many international student offices encourage a host family arrangement, some of which last for the student’s entire academic period. These long-term relationships may lead to a genuine family feeling which in turn often leads to a visit by the host to the student’s home country. The international student office also may be able to provide the educator with speakers from a wide choice of countries. It should be remembered that the majority of international students are self-supporting and that inflation affects them also. Where a gratuity would seem inappropriate, a “thank-you” gift may be acceptable.

An internationally-oriented faculty at a university is a rich resource. At the University of Hawaii, with its large number of programs which are international in nature, the Advisory Council on International Relations has been very successful during the past five years in bringing about a spirit of cooperation as well as giving coherence to a vast variety of activities. Through a series of committees and task forces, the ACIRUH is able to accelerate the flow of information and to bring scholars of common interest together. Since representatives of the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, the United Nations Associations and other organizations serve on some of its subcommittees, it serves to bring community and university together on international affairs.

Up to this point in our survey, the cost of participation has been slight and the rewards in human terms plentiful. The next major step for one who has learned all one can locally about another culture is obviously travel. With increasing costs for airfare and with inflation afflicting most of the world, this objective may require considerable planning and saving. Until a few years ago, experienced teachers could hope to receive a Fulbright or Smith-Mundt teaching grant for a year or more in one of a choice of countries. The US Office of Education still lists a few such possibilities but with few choices and heavy competition such options are scarce. The Study Abroad office of CCECS has summarized the grants available in a brochure which is up-to-date but relatively discouraging for most people.

Assuming that one must pay one’s own way for international travel, there are many educational options which vary in cost depending on the area chosen and the length of study period. For teachers, summer study abroad possibilities are to be found in every part of the world. The Study Abroad office of CCECS specializes in Asia and the Pacific but also offers several programs each summer to Europe and the United States mainland. Programs vary in length from two to twelve weeks and in cost from $400 to approximately $2000. Accommodations which are inexpensive but adequate are arranged. Residency programs providing for several weeks or months in one country offer the possibility of in-depth education experience, but most first-time international travelers seem to prefer to “learn a little bit about a lot of things” by trying to see many countries in a short time. The faculty of Art and Architecture have combined disciplines in annual joint ventures to provide students with an overview of Europe or Japan. Specialized fields of inquiry may range from intensive language study to scuba diving or hiking. The generalization may be made that the longer the period in the country and the more intensive the background preparation the more valuable will be the experience.

Institutional financing of international programs involves a larger monetary outlay and commitment, and this question goes beyond the scope of this article. As we involve more and more people in international relations, it is safe to say that there will be more public pressure for such financial investment in the future. In the interim, it is necessary for those concerned to do what they can, confident in the knowledge that the world is our campus, and that the international perspective is as close as our neighbor’s handshake.

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