

Dear Population Comrades,

August 8, 2003

The death of Randy Backlund on July 31, 2003, at his much loved summer home, 90 Mallard Pond Road, Harpswell, Maine 04079, with wife Patti and daughters Jane, Anne, and Mary by his side, deeply saddens me; as it must all of you who enjoyed working with him while driving USAID's population program forward with remarkable speed during our most thriving years, 1967-1977.

Coming to us from AID's Coordination of Economic and Military Assistance Office, Randy joined the Population Service of USAID's Office of War on Hunger in the fall of 1967. Hence he was very familiar with AID regulations and procedures. Born in Kandiyohi, Minnesota, September 29, 1920, Randy achieved a stellar record: graduating from the University of Minnesota School of Journalism before serving in the Navy during World War II; serving after the war as a special assistant to the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan) in Germany; and then as a foreign operations officer serving in the State Department, stationed in Frankfurt, Germany and Washington, DC. Along the way, somehow, he managed to earn two graduate degrees in business and industrial administration from Harvard. With the population program of AID, he rapidly established himself as an astute, quick, and resourceful manager of population funds and staff and as an excellent writer and negotiator.

This was most providential because on January 2, 1968, with President Lyndon Johnson's signature on the much-delayed Fiscal 1968 Foreign Assistance Act, we gained use of \$35 million of earmarked population funds - if we could obligate them sensibly during the six months remaining in that fiscal year. Randy immediately became a vital participant in the construction of key building blocks of what became USAID's pioneering multi-billion dollar population/family planning assistance program.

Anticipating the impending availability of \$35 million earmarked population funds in FY 1968, we had planned to provide substantial funds as soon as possible to the two foremost global providers of family planning leadership and services: the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and The Pathfinder Fund (PF). Consequently on January 3rd seeking help in arranging funding for these two organizations, I phoned AID's Contract Office. The person assigned to help was Contract Officer Judy Johnson. Telling her what we wanted to do and asking for her help, she replied, "Will it be done as a grant or a contract?" To which I responded: "Tell me the difference".

"Well, if it is to be done as a grant we need to define in general terms just what it is agreed they will use the money for. Then we will obligate the funds to them, and pray that they use the funds as promised. On the other hand

if it is to be done as a contract, then we must write the contract with sufficient specificity that they can be held to the contractual obligations; and if they do not perform as contractually obligated, then we can sue them and try to get our money back."

I responded that neither of these two options would really be appropriate for what we were undertaking because we were under considerable pressure to move quickly in launching a new far-flung activity in unknown territory in the poorest countries, with little precedence and needing to learn as we went forward.

"Why can't we simply obligate \$3 million to IPPF under a generic agreement, enabling them to use a limited amount of those funds immediately to recruit and employ staff, but only releasing the bulk of those funds from an escrow account on a sub-project by sub-project basis as the IPPF develops and submits well-designed sub-projects which we can review and either accept or reject according to evolving need, the nature of the projects proposed, their demonstrated capability, and everyone's increasing experience?" To this suggestion, Judy quickly responded, "Such action would be illegal! Or at least it would be against Agency regulations."

I heard her; but during subsequent weeks as our small staff and the rest of the Agency wrestled with many population program ground-breaking tasks aimed at obligating the full \$35 million before the June 30th deadline, Randy and I and others became additionally convinced that for a number of large projects we really did need to move in a "two-step" fashion, to combine speed of obligation with efficiency of use. During that spring, as we repeatedly tried to move the IPPF project funding toward obligation, such movement was blocked by the Contracts Office and the Program Planning and Coordination Bureau - who would lose much of their cherished intra-program decision-making power if the two-step funding mechanism were established. But as the spring wore on and the end of the fiscal year loomed, we enlisted the help of General Bill Draper in convincing AID Administrator Bill Gaud of the need and soundness of the proposed "two-step" funding mechanism; and, finally, in the last week in June, the necessary documents obligating \$3.5 million to IPPF were signed in Gaud's office by Bill Gaud (for AID) and Bill Draper (for IPPF).

With the procedural roadblocks removed by the IPPF agreement, the Agency likewise provided \$2.5 million to the Pathfinder Fund in FY 1968. These two population program actions, authored by the Population Service, instituted a new funding mechanism that enabled AID to enlist the vital close cooperative action of many private and voluntary agencies (PVOs) for the population program to a much greater extent than did other AID programs. With that

still savor the wonderful evenings we shared with their beguiling friends and neighbors along the shore. We were there in August 1971 -- enjoying sublime summer weather and delightful Backlund hospitality at South Harpswell -- when the sad news arrived that our dear colleague, Dr Harald Fredericksen, Chief, Population and Program Analysis Division, had died suddenly of anaphylaxis from bee stings in Virginia.

During most of the 1970s USAID's population/family planning program functioned with utmost strength and efficiency. With the help of Administrator John Hannah in 1972 our program achieved an ideal organizational configuration. With a superbly able and dedicated staff, as pictured here, and with Randy Backlund helping, the Office of Population received an Outstanding Performance Award from Assistant Administrator Joel Bernstein.



Office of Population receiving Outstanding Performance Award, 1972

During the next five years, we continued strongly forward in development of AID's population program until President Elect Jimmy Carter brought anti-birth control zealot Jack Sullivan into USAID during the presidential transition and let him choose new political leadership for the Population and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau -- in which the Office of Population operated.

Immediately rejecting highly qualified Deputy Assistant Administrator Keys McManus as being "too close to Ravenholt", he choose Sander Levin, defeated lawyer candidate for Governor of Michigan, as the new head of the PHA Bureau. Without demonstrated population or public health program expertise, "Hired Gun Levin", brought in several corrosive Special Assistants and proceeded to obstruct and disperse key Office of Population personnel and programs. Quickly establishing a "Hit List" including Rei Ravenholt, Bill Boynton, Randy Backlund, Hal Petersen, Jerry Winfield, Jim Brackett, and others - Sander Levin and special assistants, Steve Joseph and Pat Baldi, soon dispersed these key leaders and discombobulated and destroyed much of the population program built during the previous decade. During subsequent years, amid political changes, a considerable number of former population colleagues kept working valiantly on the population program in AID, trying to keep as much of the program as possible alive and moving forward despite many adverse decisions by political appointees.

While no longer working together, Randy and I and our families stayed in close touch, mainly by telephone. Though living on opposite coasts we never wearied of reminiscing about our halcyon years in the Office of Population and the many challenging tasks and enjoyable staff we had worked with. We took considerable satisfaction from having driven the global population/family planning program with all our strength during the most crucial decade - resulting in the prevention of some hundreds of millions of unwanted births and speeding developmental progress in many countries. But we lamented the lack of ongoing support for the completion of urgently needed global population/family planning program assistance. Much remains to be done in many African and Asian countries which are now cauldrons of hate because of unchecked fertility and overcrowding.

Randy Backlund's vital contribution toward resolution of the world's population crisis deserves to be remembered, and may inspire others to help solve remaining excess fertility problems.

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