

A.I.D.'s i d e n t i t y CRISIS

Some strange and troubling things are going on with this country's foreign aid program, and they have nothing to do with the charges of mismanagement and fraud that seem to preoccupy the media. The administration and the Congress have failed to address effectively the development challenges of poor countries at a time when the need is urgent and solutions are at hand. Now, more than ever before, accelerated development in the less developed countries of the world will serve the interests of this country and will promote world peace, security, and prosperity.

"What happens to the Agency for International Development will affect the shaping of foreign aid policies," AFSA A.I.D. Vice President Priscilla Del Bosque recently wrote. "The agency's fate will also affect the outcome of today's unprecedented opportunities throughout the world for lasting economic and democratic change. If A.I.D. is unable to meet these challenges successfully, the very survival of the agency is at stake. . . . The fundamental problems facing the agency today can be summed up in two words: leadership crisis. The agency is unable to assert forcefully and effectively an agenda for development."

Why is it that A.I.D., until recently considered the preeminent international development agency, now finds itself on the defensive in a national debate about foreign assistance priorities? Why is A.I.D. going off in directions that give too much attention to short-term programs and priorities not in the interest of long-term economic development? And why, according to Lane Holdcroft, a retired Senior Foreign Service Officer who inter-

BY
C. STUART CALLISON
AND
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viewed 50 mid-level and senior A.I.D. staffers, is morale among career professionals "extraordinarily low," in an agency where most of them once considered the work exciting, challenging, and rewarding? But the paramount question is about A.I.D.'s ability to grasp present opportunities and to inspire American leadership in the post Cold War "world order."

Several study groups have recently called for foreign aid reforms. One particularly prestigious group was commissioned by the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development and Economic Cooperation (BIFADEC) and chaired by G. Edward Schuh. The task force recommended major changes in the U.S. approach to foreign assistance (see box, page 33). But, although A.I.D. was one of the task force's sponsors and Administrator Ronald Roskens offered his personal encouragement, the group's recommendations so far have had little effect on A.I.D. policy or programs.

Why the lack of enthusiasm from the agency primarily responsible for fostering development in poor countries around the world? The answer, we believe, can be found in a shifting rationale for foreign assistance, lack of clarity in the A.I.D. mission, the still evolving vision of a new world order, and the lack of appreciation among top management of opportunities for unprecedented progress in development.

Replacing containment

The rationale for foreign assistance has been shifting for some time, as Cold War containment policy has eroded. David Steinberg, a former A.I.D. official, maintains that the administration already has a new rationale to replace containment, and it is based on serving U.S. commercial interests in the Third World. "What is new in the Bush plan," he says in the *Christian Science Monitor*, "is an effort to assist directly American businesses that compete in certain world markets." A policy based on this rationale would engender, for example, large capital projects and aid tied to the use of U.S. products.

The debate about a new rationale is ongoing, and there are other, less contentious components, such as assistance to emerging democracies and dealing with environmental degradation. Vernon Ruttan, a longtime observer of A.I.D., is pessimistic that a replacement for the "Communist containment" rationale will be found in the near future. In a 1991 article in *Challenge*, he concludes that, "... the continuing fatigue and disorientation in the U.S. bilateral effort will not be resolved by the

typical Washington remedy—reorganizing A.I.D."

An extensive reorganization exercise designed to streamline A.I.D.'s management was undertaken by Administrator Roskens in 1990. It promises to simplify the



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project design and approval process, shorten the procurement process, improve the employee incentive structure, and focus attention more on "results"—on achieving specific development objectives in each country. These reforms are commendable, but they

do not deal with the more fundamental concerns of establishing clear agency objectives, of rationalizing priorities and choices among different objectives (many of which are imposed by the Congress), or of developing sound strategies for solving development problems.

Hearts and minds

The struggle for the soul of A.I.D. has been going on for some time. Congress attempted to capture it with the 1973 Foreign Assistance Act, known as the Basic Human Needs (BHN) mandate or "New Directions," redirecting development assistance to the poor majority in developing countries. But in the later 1970s, Congress and the Carter Administration began to shift resources away from BHN toward security interests. The Reagan Administration accelerated the shift toward security interests and stressed the private sector as the key to development.

Soon after Ronald Roskens was sworn in as administrator in March 1990, he tried to clarify the mission of the agency. The starting points were five major foreign policy challenges Secretary of State James Baker cited at Roskens' swearing-in ceremony. These became known as "Baker's Charge":

- 1) Consolidate the worldwide trend toward democracy;
- 2) Build strong, free-market economies;
- 3) Help the (regional) peacemakers;
- 4) Address transnational threats—environmental degradation, drug trafficking, and terrorism; and
- 5) Strengthen international ties . . . to ensure that the positive world trends we see will continue . . . [We] must respond to needs in the developing world.

A committee of top A.I.D. staff was asked to draft an agency mission statement based on Baker's Charge, and many development professionals were dismayed to learn that the early drafts omitted any mention of development itself or of human capacity building. Baker's fifth point had become simply "disaster relief." To his credit, Roskens circulated a draft for comment and, after much

Voice in the Wilderness

At a conference on Capitol Hill in June 1991, the Task Force on Development Assistance and Cooperation unveiled a report that recommended major changes in the current U.S. approach to foreign assistance. The task force, commissioned by the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development and Economic Cooperation (BIFADEC), called for the United States to recognize a new rationale for foreign aid based on a more realistic assessment of U.S. self-interest.

This blue-ribbon task force, one of several study groups calling for similar foreign aid reforms, challenges A.I.D. to shift from its increasing emphasis on providing financial support to developing countries, which the United States can ill afford, to more collaborative development and sharing of knowledge and investments in human capital.

The priorities it recommends diverge significantly from present trends in A.I.D. The task force would emphasize long-term activities, such as building human capital, developing agricultural technology, strengthening market and service-oriented institutions, promoting family planning, improving equity and broader access to productive resources and services, and encouraging environmentally sustainable development. These activities should be undertaken in collaboration with host country counterparts, relying on indigenous institutional capacity rather than on expensive expatriate technical assistance teams.

The task force would have A.I.D. place low priority on large capital infrastructure expenditures, mixed credits, tied aid, and other subsidies to U.S. private enterprise, and deemphasize costly financial assistance with short-term impacts, such as cash transfers for balance of payments and budgetary support. Although both capital infrastructure and commercial investments are immensely important, the report notes that the international capital market can now provide for such investment needs in developing countries pursuing sound economic policies and maintaining a favorable investment policy. Private capital markets cannot, however, support essential investments in

education, health services, family planning, environmental protection, research and technology development, and other public sector activities that do not generate profits.

The United States has a distinct comparative advantage in most forms of human capacity development, such as education, health, research, training, and institution-building, and not in the provision of capital assistance, which requires large sums of money for each project. The American comparative advantage is especially strong in all aspects of agriculture, including research, education, cooperatives, and agribusiness development. In view of this and of the continued importance of agricultural development in most developing countries, the task force is sharply critical of A.I.D. for downgrading the development and dissemination of more productive and sustainable agricultural technology in its plans and programs.

The report agrees with A.I.D. and the World Bank that policy reform and structural adjustment programs are frequently necessary for successful economic growth and that A.I.D. should not waste resources in countries where bad policies seriously inhibit their productive use. However, it considers building the indigenous capacity to design, interpret, and implement reform and adjustment programs, not large capital transfers, to be the foundation for the programs' success. It also agrees with the importance of promoting private sector development but argues that, once the legal and policy environments are supportive, the most productive investments A.I.D. can make toward this end are those that build human capacities and effective educational, research, health, and other essential economic and social service institutions.

Although A.I.D. was one of the sponsors of the task force and it received personal encouragement from the A.I.D. administrator, the report and its recommendations have so far had little impact on agency policy. In a University of Minnesota staff paper on A.I.D. and the universities, Brian Jordahl and Vernon Ruttan noted that "The response of A.I.D. personnel revealed their indifference to the report."

—C. Stuart Callison and John G. Stovall

internal debate, the final A.I.D. Mission Statement issued in September 1990 added a "concern for individuals and the development of their economic and social well-being" and a statement that "A.I.D. assists nations . . . [to] improve the quality of human life and . . . expand the range of individual opportunities by reducing poverty, ignorance, and malnutrition."

The concerned staff thought they had won a victory, but it proved premature. The last sentence quoted was conspicuously omitted from the administrator's statement in the *A.I.D. FY 1992 Congressional Presentation* (submitted in February 1991), which quotes most of the rest of the Mission Statement. In the Bush Administration rewrite of the Foreign Assistance Act, submitted to Congress in April 1991, building human capacity is listed as a form of humanitarian assistance rather than either a productive investment or an ultimate development goal, and the reduction of poverty is a "humanitarian assistance need" rather than a central purpose of development.

Trickle down or filter up?

Part of the internal disagreement is about whether economic growth is an end in itself or a means to raising incomes of the poor. Taking its cue from Baker's Charge, present A.I.D. leadership has given even greater emphasis to economic growth, long considered one of the main purposes of foreign assistance, while improvement in human capacity has been relegated to a form of humanitarian assistance.

Economic growth is a means—and a very important one, without which people-oriented goals cannot be achieved and sustained—but it is not an end in itself. The pattern of growth and the distribution of its benefits are important considerations. In contrast, greater indigenous human capacity is not only an ultimate development goal that economic growth must sustain, it is also a critical element in sustaining economic growth. Without increasing human capacity, it is impossible to break the vicious cycle of poverty and succeed at development.

Some in A.I.D. have zealously pursued market-oriented growth *per se*. During the tenure of the late Alan Woods as A.I.D. administrator, his chief of staff main-

tained that public sector expenditures on health and education were "consumption" activities to be discouraged. Private sector delivery of social services was the preferred alternative.

Tied aid

Key agency officials have sought support from the U.S. business community by proposing and promoting greater use of large infrastructure programs tied to U.S. procurement and other forms of "tied aid and mixed credits." This would subsidize selected U.S. exports abroad. Until now, such assistance has been generally discouraged as a matter of policy, because it is inconsistent with the long-standing U.S. position favoring free trade, although it has long been permitted in specific situations to counter similar support by foreign governments to their exporters.

In testimony before the House Foreign Operations Subcommittee in March 1990, a senior A.I.D. policy official proposed a major reallocation of funds to support programs of this nature, stating that, "The most important contribution the United States makes to economic progress in developing countries is its own economic growth. U.S. economic growth has generated increased markets for developing country exports." He said, "U.S. economic assistance must become part of the U.S. effort to compete

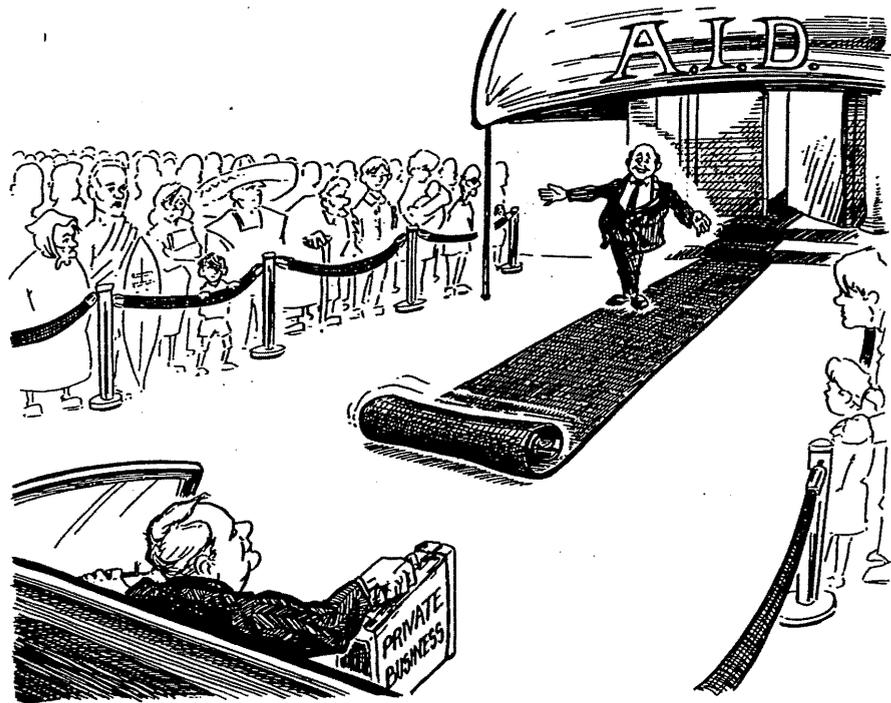


ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS MADDEN

in the global market." This position is difficult to reconcile with the fact that the U.S. economy has been growing for decades without much positive effect on the poorer and more distant developing countries. Furthermore, subsidies to private U.S. firms encourage misallocation of resources toward commercial activities that are not to our own comparative advantage and cannot be sustained without further subsidies.

During the debate over revisions in the Foreign

Assistance Act in 1991, the administration formally opposed large-scale use of mixed credits and tied aid for capital projects. The administration maintained that such programs would conflict with the U.S. negotiating position in favor of freer trade and reduce flexibility to respond to political and security concerns. Letters from the Department of State to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, responding to a legislative initiative to this effect (sponsored by Democratic Senators Boren, Bentsen, Byrd, and Baucus and dubbed the "Killer B's" bill), agreed, however, that "U.S. bilateral assistance (should) be used to the maximum extent possible to support U.S. goods and services."

Despite the administration position against the "killer B's" bill, this initiative is still very much alive. It recently passed the Senate 99 to 0 as an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Authorization Bill (although it was later weakened in the conference committee). Furthermore, A.I.D. has requested congressional authority to use development assistance (DA) funds for an expanded capital infrastructure program tied to U.S. procurement and is considering a request for a fairly large sum to support a "Capital Projects Fund" in its FY 93 budget submission.

Lost opportunity

While the struggle for the soul of the agency goes on, the possibility of significantly reducing poverty and hunger through development is within our grasp. There is no longer much mystery about how to achieve sustained economic growth and development if the people and their leaders adopt the requisite policies and direct their own resources toward those ends.

Despite the poverty and income disparities of developing countries, the technology and institutional models exist that, when adapted to each country's particular conditions, can:

- Provide productive employment for most workers and raise family incomes above the poverty level
- Reduce hunger, ignorance, and preventable disease
- Promote democratic, pluralistic societies, and
- Enable each country to share global prosperity in a sustainable environment.

Experience has shown that these goals are attainable over time, even though the path to success is fraught with political difficulties. Several countries have mastered the basic requirements and are making rapid progress, but many others still lag far behind. The "new world order" can be accomplished without diminishing the income of any other country, as some fear. Indeed, the more other countries, using their own resources, can provide for their own basic needs and increase their household incomes above poverty levels, the more of our exports they will be able to buy. Poor people are also poor customers. Supportive human resource and institutional development (broadly defined to include the policy and regulatory environment) and broad-based, market-oriented, sustainable economic growth are essential means to achieving these goals. In most countries, measures to

reduce the rate of population growth and to enhance the productivity of agriculture, especially the production, processing, and distribution of food, are also important ingredients of success.

Doing good and doing well

In a world where 35,000 people, mostly children, die each day of hunger, malnutrition, and disease arising mostly from abject poverty, most people feel a sense of humanitarian urgency. The prize is more than a noble humanitarian goal, however, as important as that is. Democracy requires a well-informed and educated electorate, difficult to sustain out of poverty. Rapid population growth combined with poverty and declining per capita income puts inexorable pressure on the environment and natural resource base, the resulting degradation of which affects us all. Increasing demographic competition for static or declining sources of income leads to local and regional strife and is not conducive to political stability, world security, or the development of democratic institutions, not to mention profitable world trade.

In its *World Development Report 1990 on Poverty* the World Bank compiled impressive evidence that poverty can be ameliorated rapidly and in a politically sustainable way by pursuing a two-part strategy: "The first element is to promote the productive use of the poor's most abundant asset—labor. It calls for policies that harness market incentives, social and political institutions, infrastructure, and technology to that end. The second is to provide basic social services to the poor. Primary health care, family planning, nutrition, and primary education are especially important. The two elements are mutually reinforcing; one without the other is not sufficient."

Vernon Ruttan, reviewing the lessons learned from several decades of development assistance in both sector and macroeconomic policies and assistance programs, concludes that, "*The removal of distortions in monetary, fiscal, trade, commodity, and consumer policy does not produce development! Policy reform is, in some countries, a necessary condition for development. . . . But the real sources of economic growth are investments in human and physical capital and in productivity-enhancing technical and institutional change.*"

The evidence is strong that the way to real, sustainable, economic and social development is known and, while difficult, is achievable. It is the way to a "new world order" that would be far more than just a "pax Americana" or a "pax United Nationae" based on a multilateral military peacekeeping force and a reduction in nuclear armaments. But, while the administration and Congress wrangle over how to carve up the limited development assistance budget and other contentious issues, such as family planning, the golden opportunity seems to be slipping away.

Charting a course

The accomplishments of the administration in seeking peace and managing delicate relationships in the Middle

East, Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere are most praiseworthy. What is yet to emerge, however, is a credible vision of what kind of future we are keeping the peace for and how to achieve it. That vision must involve the economic, political, and social development of indigenous human and institutional capacity, as well as the operating shells of democratic institutions, free market economies, and opportunities for trade. A.I.D. should be the leading American spokesman for this indigenous capacity development: it should be the substantive, working generator of the "new world order."

Such indigenous capacity-building requires, among other things, scientific manpower training and institution building, long-term scientific research and technological collaboration, and permanent links between U.S. and developing country scientific and higher education institutions. For development to succeed, developing country analysts must be able to determine priority investment strategies and to identify and manage key problems, constraints, and opportunities within each important sector. There are no "quick fixes" or short cuts. Significant progress will require years and, in some countries, perhaps a generation or two of new leaders. The BIFADEC Task Force recognizes the long-term nature of the challenge and provides a persuasive case for staying the course.

The ultimate question seems to be whether A.I.D. is to regain its leadership as a development agency. If it does, the agency can help guide the country by a dynamic vision of the new world it can help create. To be successful it must protect long-term investments in the human and institutional capacities of developing countries from more immediate political demands. On the other hand, if present trends continue, A.I.D. will use its financial resources primarily to support short-term foreign policy, political, and commercial objectives, thereby abdicating its developmental mandate. Some would argue that A.I.D. must do all of the above. But experience suggests that in practice, it is difficult, if not impossible, to prevent immediate policy needs from overwhelming long-term objectives. The stakes are high. They include A.I.D.'s contribution to shaping the future of the world. ■

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ROSKENS:

FOLLOW THE LEADER?

TO THE EDITOR:

The article on foreign assistance ("A.I.D.'s Identity Crisis, *January Journal*) takes fundamental issue with the notion that the Agency for International Development should follow the policy lead of the secretary of State. I would not be surprised to encounter this viewpoint in an advocacy journal representing one of the sectoral perspectives on the North-South dialogue, but I was dismayed that a career officer of USAID would co-author such an article.

America has a tradition of foreign assistance as old as our republic. This tradition has been shaped and molded by the courage and vision of American presidents and secretaries of State—leaders willing to look beyond the provincial conventions of the day.

There is always room for debate about the nature and the quality of foreign assistance. America's assistance to the Greek struggle for independence in the 1820s was seen by some as tomfoolery of the first order. When America sent both food and money for the victims of the Irish famine in the 1840s there were dissenters who thought our treasure was better spent closer to home. When failed Russian agricultural policies threatened thousands with starvation in the 1920s, there were Americans who criticized Herbert

Hoover's program to send food and relief supplies to Russians in need.

This is not to question the right of C. Stuart Callison, a USAID officer who works on programs with American agricultural universities, to express an independent view of American foreign assistance priorities. I regret, however, and vigorously disagree with Mr. Callison's suggestion that the agency charged to carry out our national for-

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eign assistance efforts has lost its way because it has elected to accept the policy direction established by President Bush and Secretary Baker. I would hope and expect that few professional Foreign Service officers would share his view.

*Ronald W. Roskens
Administrator, USAID*

STUART CALLISON REPLIES:

I am very disappointed and regret that Administrator Roskens misunderstands the article about USAID. Neither John Stovall nor I have ever suggested that USAID should not follow the foreign policy guidance of the president and the secretary of State. The issues we raise involve the interpretation of that guidance in light of experience and authorizing legislation and the better design and implementation of programs to achieve the goals established by the political process, not a challenge to that process.

How to achieve these objectives with limited resources presents many technical problems—some of which can be generalized but many of which differ with each

country situation. It is not an appropriate arena for blanket political guidance on specific worldwide foreign assistance priorities. It is the subject of the BIFADEC Task Force report, the technical analysis that provided the basis for our article.

After nearly 18 years in USAID working in 13 different countries as a developmental economist, I am convinced that, while difficult, the most important development goals of the Foreign Assistance Act can be accomplished and Secretary Baker's challenge can be met if we apply the lessons learned during the last three decades of experience.

VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

TO THE EDITOR:

The article "A.I.D.'s Identity Crisis," refers to the BIFADEC Task Force as a "voice in the wilderness." As chairman of that task force I would like to offer your readers a perspective on the crisis that is the focus of the article.

First, let me compliment the *Journal* and the authors for candidly laying these important issues on the table for discussion within the Foreign Service family—a group that should understand them and appreciate the stakes. . . .

During the conduct of our task force report over the past two years I have discussed this country's development assistance policy with several hundred development specialists. . . . There is a surprising degree of consensus about what is wrong with our foreign aid program and on most of the needed reforms. Unfortunately, the outlook for reform is bleak, given the hostile and uninformed public attitude toward foreign aid. Few of our citizens know just how modest our foreign aid expenditures are relative to our GNP (we rank near the bottom of industrialized nations). Fewer still perceive that we can help ourselves while helping others. These difficulties are exacerbated by the inability of Congress and the administration to agree on programs that will best serve our interests.

Although the task force is critical of USAID and some of its policies, we

recognize that many of the problems are beyond that agency's control. We are encouraged that a strong but dwindling core of development professionals remain committed to improving life in the developing world. . . . We must keep on trying for reform. It is in our own best interests to do so.

*G. Edward Schuh
Dean and professor
Hubert H. Humphrey
Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota*

TO THE EDITOR:

Congratulations to the *Journal* and to Stuart Callison and John Stovall for giving us a very important and thoughtful article on USAID. It takes courage to write and print an article like this. But today's events, as well as loyalty to longer-range American interests, demand it. We must all face up to the fact the USAID is on the slippery slope of post-Cold War internal politics and of dramatic changes in many of the developing countries—countries which face chronic problems of poverty and environmental degradation. The president and the secretary of State have had little to say on these subjects, and the statements of USAID's leadership have not helped much.

But your article has helped. It has helped open up what will probably turn out to be a long debate on what fundamental U.S. interests need to be promoted and protected in our relations with the developing countries and what ways are most effective in serving these interests while helping developing countries to meet the needs of their rapidly growing populations.

Callison and Stovall have hit the bull's-eye by highlighting those objectives, shared by the administration, Congress, and most of your readers, in the context of tough budgetary restraints. The authors point out the priority USAID should give to helping these countries develop their human resources through research, training, and institution building. This is what we, as Americans, do best—and it is relatively cheap.

The *Journal* is to be commended for airing well-informed views on a subject that demands the attention of all of us.

*Robert O. Blake
Ambassador, retired
Washington, D.C.*

TO THE EDITOR:

The article, "A.I.D.'s Identity Crisis" has awakened me to the present status of the agency where I made my home for so many years.

As long as one worked overseas in the aid environment, he knew what his job was—to help the indigenous government and people to help themselves. This may have been a spinoff of what the U.S. government perceived as its aims—short-term political, long-term economic, or anti-narcotic—but we generally spent the taxpayer's money to help the common people. . . .

USAID sometimes has influenced the consumption of American products abroad. However, let us not make the promotion of American exports the main purpose of USAID. I would have considerable difficulty in accepting a USAID role to serve U.S. commercial interests.

While true that we justified the program partly on security grounds, I always felt that the U.S. had humanitarian aims, also. Replacement of the Communist superpower and its allies in Eastern Europe by a new insecurity afflicting the peoples of those countries would seem to offer USAID an opportunity to play its traditional role once again. I hope that USAID and Congress will be able to accept this challenge, despite budgetary problems, and allow me to hold on to this idealism I've cherished about my past career.

*Carl R. Fritz
USAID, retired
Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

TO THE EDITOR:

The article, "A.I.D.'s Identity Crisis" by Stu Callison and John Stovall is an inspiring call to USAID to get back to the business of doing what does best, and as such has my full support. I have some difficulty, however, with the section on "Tied Aid," particularly the use of the term "subsidy."

For one thing, USAID's involvement in mixed credits has been minimal. . . . While mixed credits may amount to a subsidy, the authors apply the term "subsidy" to USAID's procurement requirements, as well. I do not agree with applying this term to source/origin requirements, which have been with us since the birth of the agency. Most of USAID's procurements of goods and services are based on competition among

U.S. firms, and suppliers earn no more from USAID-financed procurements than from commercial sales. If the "subsidy" is imputed to be the difference between the cost of the U.S. commodity and that which may be available from suppliers from other countries, this is not a subsidy except in the sense that all of USAID's programs are subsidies. . . . I frankly believe that bilateral assistance should be tied to the donor. By definition American aid should consist largely of American products, services, and technology. . . . The fact that they are American is justification enough.

*Arthur J. Laemmerzabl
Director, Office of Commodity
Management and Trade*

TO THE EDITOR:

I work in an office on the campus of a Big Ten university. I read the article, "A.I.D.'s Identity Crisis" with particular interest, as I was recently told I will be laid off from my job due to budget cuts.

Because of the aims of our project, I am often reminded of the old Chinese proverb: Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. We are one of eight collaborative research support programs (CRSP). The CRSPs work with scientists in U.S. universities to develop better ways of growing different crops in various climates. [U.S. universities] in turn work closely with universities in Third World countries, so that their scientists can learn to develop the varieties of crops they need.

The very thing we are doing is sharing knowledge with those universities, building institutions, and forging lasting relationships between and among people across America and in over a dozen foreign countries. All the items mentioned in the article should be USAID's number one priority—and we are getting our budgets cut!

Disaster relief is exactly giving a man a fish; it's commendable and sometimes it's necessary, but what will this do for world hunger next year or in the year 2010? We can work with the farmer, who has just a few hectares, to plant a type of cowpea that will live through the flood, or the farmer will store a good supply of cowpeas in a way developed by a CRSP research team to resist insects and will therefore feed his family till the next harvest season.

It's so typical of our government and its bureaucrats that a showcase project like ours has to continually defend itself and beg for support.

*Bonnie E. Zell
Secretary
Michigan State University*

SLINKING INTO RETIREMENT

TO THE EDITOR:

I felt a jolt of recognition when I read the tag line on David Jones's essay on Foreign Service retirement (December 1991 *Journal*). Someone had finally put a finger on it: "Nothing so ill becomes the Foreign Service as the nature of our leaving it." As Jones says, "Foreign Service officers sneak into retirement . . . forced retirement is a badge of failure."

We all know the rule: up or out, and with eyes open and egos fully charged, we make a bet with the system that we can do it. When we don't—and our colleagues do—by any definition of the word I know, we have indeed failed. Of course we slink away!

In any case, I don't think Jones offers a real alternative—except perhaps for those of ambassadorial rank. If I understand him, those of lesser rank would fall out in front of the Foreign Service Club and march by the podium where the retiring great one takes the salute, then delivers a valedictory address full of wisdom.

As for "the rest of us," Jones doesn't seem to have anything better to suggest than the office retirement parties which we already practice.

So for those about to get bounced out, "shame" and "slink" will remain the key words. For future retirees, however, time may very well effect the necessary changes. As the discredited culture of an elite and privileged Foreign Service fades away, and as today's young officers are shaped in the new culture of corporate efficiency, the concept that "some make it and some don't" will come to be accepted as normal and natural. Like at GM. Or IBM.

*John Hols
USIA, retired
Spokane, Washington*