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PROGRAMMING INTERNATIONAL VISITORS IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES :

PROBLEMS OF THE 1960's

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A personal essay by

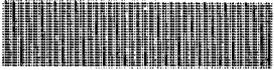
Dean B. Mahin

March 1967

# COSERV



**National Council for  
Community Services to  
International Visitors**



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March 27, 1967

Mr. William J. Elsen  
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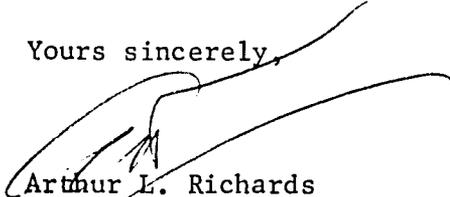
Dear Bill:

Mr. Mahin of the Government Affairs Institute has written a thoughtful essay on the subject of programming foreign visitors to American communities.

Unquestionably, some of the questions he raises will be discussed and hopefully resolved in the months ahead.

In case you have not seen a copy, I am pleased to send one herewith.

Yours sincerely,

  
Arthur L. Richards  
Executive Director  
C O S E R V

ALR/me

Enclosure  
Essay

## INTRODUCTION

This paper is a substitute for my presence at the COSERV Workshop on Programming in Urban Affairs in Philadelphia, March 8-10, 1967. I had some part in the formulation of the original idea for this workshop, but was not able to take an active part in COSERV affairs during the time that the specific program for the Workshop was being worked out. When we started talking about this Workshop about a year ago I felt strongly that its main theme should be ways of improving the substantive programming of international visitors in larger American cities, and that an effort should be made to exclude from the Workshop any other matters (including organizational, financial and personnel matters) which did not bear directly on programming operations.

In the interim I found myself with a period of involuntary leisure and was able to give a good deal of thought to current problems of programming international visitors. In thinking through the various programming problems and the cause and effect relationships involved, I came to a somewhat modified view of the desirable focus of this Workshop. Much of the time of the Workshop's participants must be devoted to specific programming problems and to the kind of ideas and information we should try to communicate to our visitors. However, I now feel that we must also focus our attention on various operational problems which result from organizational and personnel problems: it hardly needs to be said that these organizational and personnel problems involve money, although not exclusively.

I have written this paper as a Member of the COSERV Board, rather than as a representative of the Governmental Affairs Institute. It is not a statement of Institute policy; in fact, it has not even been read by the Institute's general management or by most of my Exchange Division colleagues prior to reproduction in this form. It is intended to be a statement of personal views and concerns derived from involvement with the programming of foreign visitors over a period of nearly 18 years.

### Programming International Visitors in the 1950's

In order to place the developments of the 1960's in a proper perspective, it seems necessary to begin this paper with a brief look at the evolution of community services to short-term international visitors during the decade of the 1950's.

The Federal Government's sponsorship of large-scale international visitor programs began in 1949-50 with the first short-term visits under the newly passed Smith-Mundt Act and the initiation of a very large number of visits by German leaders and specialists under the U.S. reorientation and democratization programs for Germany.

During the first few years of the program centralized community programming organizations for foreign visitors simply did not exist in most cities. The principal exceptions were a few port cities where the Department of State had established Reception Centers; these centers were initially set up for port reception functions, but the handling of local visitor programming was soon added. Prior to 1954 the Department of State's short-term visitor program was conducted by nearly a dozen different government and private programming agencies each operating in a relatively specific professional field. This high degree of specialization among programming agencies was based on the fact that each agency had to reach directly into most communities and identify specific persons whose cooperation could be enlisted in connection with the visit of a particular individual or group. In each case the programming agency had to find someone in the community who could himself provide some of the information and experience desired for the visitors and who could also arrange for contacts with others in the community. The programming agency had to rely mainly on established professional channels: for example, the U.S. Office of Education sent educators to local superintendents of schools, the Department of Labor went directly to local unions, and the Governmental Affairs Institute relied mainly on professors of political science and other local members of the political science/public administration fraternity.

This system meant that a good deal of the time of the programming agency personnel was taken up in soliciting the ad hoc cooperation of various local people. However, it produced some really amazing results. Most Americans were delighted to cooperate in these new visitor programs. Many Americans who were then in substantial positions in their respective fields had been past the age to become directly involved in America's wartime and immediate post-war activities abroad; however, they were now given the opportunity to serve on diplomacy's front line, and they responded to the call with great enthusiasm and - usually - great effectiveness. The files on these early visits show an amazing pattern of mobilization of the community's total resources on behalf of the overwhelmed visitor or group.

Like most primarily spontaneous phenomena, such personalized programming could not last forever. Sooner or later each individual who had previously served as a personal local sponsor found that he had to curtail his involvement in the program. The stated reasons were almost always the pressure of personal and/or professional commitments; undoubtedly this was the main reason in many cases, although some observers perceived that the factor of declining novelty was also significant. In the short range the withdrawal of many of these early personal sponsors led the programming agencies to seek alternative contacts in the community on the same personal-professional basis (i.e., appealing to an individual on a personal basis through professional channels). However, eventually these replacements also were burned out by over-use, and the problem remained.

At this point the American organizational genius began to assert itself. People in various communities, unable to cope alone with the increasing flood of visitors, began to get together with others with similar experiences and attempt to devise a better way to do the job. The result was usually some type of local organization. In some places it was discovered early that the mobilization of the community volunteer resources on the necessary scale could not be accomplished purely by volunteers themselves and that the job required one or more staff people who were paid to stay in an office and handle the necessary arrangements and coordination. However, in other places the whole job could be done by volunteers; the difference depended mainly on the kind of job to be done and the size of the job to be done in the community.

By 1958, a number of such groups had emerged. They had little in common as regards size, organizational type, scope of function, and so on, but they did the job. Returning to the U.S. side of the short-term visitor program in 1950 as a GAI Program Officer, after a three year absence mostly spent abroad, I was delighted by the progress that had been made since the rugged and chaotic days in the State Department in the early fifties. A program officer could concentrate on working out a thoughtful and balanced general plan for each visit, with a reasonable assurance that the implementation of the plan in most communities would be competently handled by imaginative local sponsors who didn't have to be told (and usually didn't want to be told) how best to accomplish the agreed plan in his or her own community.

It was true even then that there were some limits on the program officer's logical expectations from some of the largest cities, but these cities did not then play as crucial a role as they have come to play in the last few years. The fact that the visitor's program in a few very large cities might not be too substantive and might emphasize touristic activities needn't worry the program officer too much if he could count on the visitor having some quite intensive and serious programming in several medium and/or smaller communities.

Unfortunately, today's program officer can't count on the visitor having more intensive and serious programming in medium and/or smaller communities to nearly the same extent as formerly. The role of smaller communities has become more limited, and the role of medium-sized cities has declined, in our program at least, in not only relative but even absolute terms. These facts, which are altogether regrettable in many ways, need explaining. In order to do so we must look first at two significant changes that have taken place in the Department of State's International Visitor Program in the last few years. These are (a) the declining length of visit, and (b) increased visitor specialization.

#### The Declining Length of Visit

The average length of the total stay in the U.S. of most State Department international visitors has been declining over the last few years, and will decline more in the next year or so. Some of us recall when the "standard" length of foreign leader grant was 90 days. Aside from a few in the "specialist" category, the 90-day visit eventually disappeared since few real leaders in any field could be away from home that long and, in any case, three months was too long a time to remain on an essentially itinerant basis. For some years now, until this year, most leader grants were automatically written for 60 days unless the foreign service post specifically requested a shorter grant. However, the number who stayed as long as 60 days has been declining, and unfortunately the visitor who did have time for a 60-day visit was often the poor selection who was too unimportant at home to feel under much pressure to get home.

The question of length of grants came up again last fall when the Department was reviewing ways of reducing expenditures as necessitated by reduced FY-1967 appropriations. We in GAI said that we thought that the "standard" length could be reduced to 45 days for individuals and 30 days for group projects. However, there are already many much shorter visits, and there will probably be even more very short visits in the coming year as the Department seeks to stretch its funds through various devices including a greater emphasis on partial grants.

This reduction in the average length of grants automatically means that the visitor has to cut out some community visits he might have made if he had more time. GAI's statistical average visitor in 1960 went to ten different American communities, while his FY-1966 counterpart visited only nine communities. Unfortunately the visitor will usually retain the larger, more glamorous, and more diversified cities and drop the medium and smaller communities. We will examine this proposition and its consequences in greater detail in the following section of this paper.

### Increasing Visitor Specialization

Alongside this trend toward shorter visits there is a trend toward visitors with more serious and more specialized interests.

In the years around 1960 a larger percentage of our visitors were men with quite broad and general responsibilities at home and equally broad and general interests while in this country. Some of these interests were quite serious ones, even if they lacked precise definition, but in many cases protocol and prestige considerations took priority over the process of acquiring information. For example, during that period we had a large number of quite high ranking political and governmental leaders from the then very newly independent countries of Africa and Asia. Visitors of this type are now much less frequent. The new country from which we receive a protocol-oriented parliamentary delegation or group of top officials in 1960 is more likely to have been represented in our 1966 program by a series of visitors in moderately specialized fields who want to learn specific things which are relevant to the political and/or economic development of their nation. Generally, we are now more likely to get executives rather than politicians, bureau chiefs with specialized fields of interest rather than cabinet ministers with general interests, and men concerned with complex national and international problems rather than men concerned with purely local problems and issues.

This pattern of increased specialization can also be observed in the information media category. In 1960 the typical visitor in this group was the editor or correspondent who came here to inform himself generally about the U.S. and do a few general articles for his paper about the current U.S. scene. Today's more typical information media visitor is the executive of a television station who has come here to gather specific ideas and techniques in educational and public affairs broadcasting. Even the visiting foreign newspaperman of today is more likely to be a specialist (i.e., a science writer, an economic editor, or a military analyst).

Since GAI used to get the lion's share of the visitor with rather general interests while the other programming agencies received more specialists in both the general and specific meaning of that word, it seems relatively safe to assume that this trend toward more specialized visitors is true of the program as a whole.

This increasing specialization, coupled with shorter visits, means more visitors who are anxious to use their limited time to accomplish fairly specific objectives. It means that today's visitor is more likely to have valid reasons behind his desire to visit a number of major metropolitan areas, since the Americans with special experience in the visitor's field are more likely to be found in these areas. Finally, it means greater reluctance on the visitor's part to go to secondary and smaller cities unless these cities have something special to offer the visitor in his field or fields of interest.

With this background, we can now proceed to a separate and more detailed examination of the situations in smaller, medium, and larger cities.

### The Declining Role of Smaller Communities

When someone writes the history of the foreign visitor program, no chapter will be more dramatic or more heart-warming than that on visits to decidedly smaller American communities. Up to a few years ago, a program officer could hope to include a smaller community visit in the itinerary of most visitors with the expectation of an almost inevitable result, i.e., that the visitor would consider that visit the high point of his American trip. In the smaller community the visitor was given a kind of attention by the community's leadership that it was quite impossible to obtain for him in larger cities. Every door in the community was open to him, he was wined and dined and shown everything, and he usually left exhausted but happy in the knowledge that at last he had discovered the "real America."

The small community visit served a number of purposes. The visitor who was overwhelmed by the attention he received in a smaller city carried away with him a warm feeling of American hospitality and friendliness which persisted in most cases even when his treatment in some larger cities left something to be desired. The visitor who saw schools, city offices, local plants and farms in a smaller city usually didn't want similar activities in the larger cities, with a resulting decrease in pressures on the larger city sponsors. Following an intensive smaller city visit the visitor often wanted a schedule which was less demanding, both physically and intellectually, in the subsequent larger city or cities. Finally, the visitor that went to a smaller city had an opportunity to observe certain institutions, programs, and activities which were on a small enough scale to be comprehensible and/or relevant to the visitor's home country. This meant that the problem of finding relevant experiences for visitors from less developed areas in the large cities was not as serious as it might otherwise have been.

The idea of pausing somewhere to experience life at the grass roots became a rather popular one. Visitors had frequently heard of the extraordinary experiences of their fellow countrymen in smaller communities and visitors with rather general interests were easily convinced that this was an important part of obtaining a "full and fair picture of American life".

I regret to say that this kind of small community visit is much less common today that it once was. The reasons are closely related to the factors discussed in the previous sections - shorter visits and increased visitor specialization.

Today's visitor, less concerned than his 1960 counterpart with acquiring a "full and fair picture of American life," often feels that the grass roots stop is an appealing frill which is nonetheless not quite consistent with the specialized purposes of his visit. Department of State visitors these days are more likely to have mainly urban interests, while AID brings most of those with essentially rural interests. Even if the visitor is intrigued by the idea of a smaller city visit, he often reluctantly concludes that he just doesn't have time for it.

The factor of travel time is also significant, and more so than formerly due to shorter visits. The visitor who casually talks of a brief stop in a small town in Kansas or Nebraska enroute between Chicago and Denver has no idea of the contrast between the quick direct jet flight and the series of takeoffs, landings, layovers, etc., involved in getting to and from most smaller Midwestern towns. As for trains and busses, the decline in the former in both quantity and quality is well known and the improvements in the latter have not been significant enough to make surface travel over fairly long distances really feasible for very many of our visitors. Thus today's "smaller city" visit is likely to take place in one of a relatively small group of towns around 100,000 population which have good feeder-line connections with frequently visited major cities. The present prominence in the program of Sioux City would not have been possible without both Elmer Swensen and Ozark Airlines.

Time also enters into this decline of the general smaller city visit in another way. In the past two years GAI program officers, faced with a third more visitors than in 1960, have often agreed to respectable but fairly standardized itineraries because they simply didn't have time to do otherwise. Arranging smaller city visits takes time. The program officer frequently encounters repeated frustrations and delays in arranging a smaller city because the travel connections are too difficult, the sponsor can't be reached to confirm the visit, or the sponsor is unavailable at the necessary time. The program officer who often has to wrap up two separate visitor programs in a single week can't afford to let the question of a smaller community visit delay the whole programming process. The smaller community visit is thus often the victim of the general time squeeze.

The type of smaller community visit most common in the years around 1960 was three or four days in length and was designed to give the visitor a broad view of the civic, political, cultural, economic and agricultural life of the community and its environs. Although this type of visit has become much less common, this does not mean that visitor travel into the hinterlands is less common than previously. In fact, the number of different communities visited by GAI visitors in fiscal year 1966 was 50% larger than in 1960 (194 in 1960, 292 in 1966).

This apparent contradiction is explained by the greatly increased number of visits to non-urban areas to see some institution or activity in the visitor's specialized field. Our FY-1966 visitors made 429 of these special purpose visits to 92 different communities. Half (212 visits to 36 localities) were to Federal government installations ranging from military bases and space centers to agricultural experiment stations and national parks. The other large category of visits were those to universities and colleges located in smaller communities (169 visits in 40 communities). These special purpose visits are usually quite brief, often only one working day; the visitor thus has little or no time to see anything other than the installation or institution he came to visit. Aside from giving the visitor a look at some hinterland geography, these special purpose visits serve few if any of the broader purposes served by the longer and more diversified smaller community visits.

### The Limited Role of Secondary Cities

The medium-sized cities in this country have always been in a different situation than both the largest and the decidedly smaller cities. The type of city to which I refer has somewhere between 100,000 and 1,000,000 people, may be the largest city in its state but is not the largest city in its region, lacks any scenic or other magnet that attracts foreign visitors, and has relatively few institutions, industries, or programs which are not found in many other localities.

Organizations to assist foreign visitors have been established in most such cities, usually because of an evident need for services to foreign students; foreign students have always been more widely dispersed throughout the country than short-term visitors. Once established, these organizations seem to encounter a common problem: while local people enjoy working with the short-term visitors, the demand for such visitors clearly exceeds the supply. The leadership of these local groups knows that the numbers of short-term visitors on Government and private programs have increased significantly in recent years, and they feel that their communities have failed to get their fair share of the increase. Full of local civic pride, they often conclude that this limited role must result from some lack of awareness of their communities on the part of the programming agencies, so they attempt to fill this gap through correspondence, Washington visits, and buttonholing of agency representatives at COSERV regional meetings. Yet it is ironic that, despite their untapped resources and the kind of fresh enthusiasm which is badly needed in this program these days, the possibilities for expanding the role of these secondary cities are very limited.

The biggest problem has always been time, and it is getting worse. Visitors have always been divided into two rough groups - (a) those who on arrival already have too many cities in mind for the time available, and (b) those who have time for visits to cities beyond those they have initially in mind. As the average grant has become shorter, more and more visitors fall into the first category. There is no point in suggesting a visit to Cincinnati to a man who already has too long a list of "must" cities. Thus our use of these secondary cities has actually declined during a period when our volume of visitors has increased sharply. For example in 1960 we sent 210 visitors to 13 major Midwestern cities not including Chicago and Detroit; in fiscal year 1966 our visitors made only 169 visits to these cities. As we have noted, a visit to such a city may be the one that doesn't happen when the present statistical average visitor finds he only has time for nine communities instead of ten as in 1960.

I do not, of course, assume that it is always inevitable that the visitor drop the secondary city (or the second secondary city, since our statistical average visitor did go to one city in the secondary category). However, convincing a visitor to go to such a city rather than to a much larger city requires more than good intentions. Most of these secondary cities are only names on a map to most foreigners.

It is most unlikely that the visitor has ever heard of these cities from fellow countrymen and it is also less likely that these cities will be suggested by Americans he meets abroad or upon arrival here. When one of these cities is suggested by someone for any kind of sensible reason the program officer then usually tries to suggest other activities in that city which would interest the visitor. However, these cities wouldn't be in the secondary city category in the first place if they had many program assets which frequently attracted the attention of visitors and/or program officers.

Unless a peg somehow emerges on which the program officer can hang a suggestion for a particular secondary city, he is caught in a vicious circle even when the visitor's situation permits consideration of additional or alternative cities. The visitor already has some ideas, however vague and unrealistic, about the things he might do and see in the cities on his own list of possibilities. If the program officer suggests a city, it is up to him to sell the visitor something definite. It is not enough to suggest that the visitor go to St. Louis because it is a nice place with nice people. Unlike both the largest and the decidedly smaller communities, these medium-sized cities do not usually sell themselves on the basis of general atmosphere. The dilemma of the medium-sized city is in part that it lacks both the sophisticated appeal of the very large city and the rustic appeal of the much smaller city. The program officer must thus refer to some specific resource of the community which the visitor is not likely to encounter elsewhere, but such resources are scarce in these cities. Moreover, the program officer's rare use of these cities makes it unlikely that he will be really familiar with the city, and so he may overlook a peg on which he could have hung a useful suggestion.

I regret to say that these communities themselves have not been of much help to the programming agencies in identifying their own unique and special resources. Personnel of the local groups in these cities seem to have difficulty sorting out the unusual from the commonplace. Both the written and oral resource descriptions we have received have usually skimmed over the entire spectrum of human activity without giving us much that is specific. The written resource lists tend to be directories of local institutions, yet the program officer doesn't need to be told that the city has schools, courts, newspapers, municipal services, etc. He is trying to match the visitor's special interest with something special in one of these cities, and he can't stop to re-read a long resource list on a number of cities every time he has a particular problem.

If these secondary cities want to have a significant role in the visitor program in the future, they must somehow try harder to identify their special and unusual resources and make these known to programming agencies in a form that can readily be used. There is room here for a good deal of initiative by individual communities, although I believe that COSERV should also concern itself with this problem. COSERV already has plans for a meeting of these secondary city organizations in the fall of 1967; this meeting was conceived

largely as a device to acquaint programming agency personnel with the resources of these communities, in order to promote their greater use. However, the meeting itself will not be really successful unless the community representatives give some careful thought in advance to what they have to offer that will really interest the agencies.

Moreover, since only a limited number of agency program officers can attend this meeting, the problem goes beyond just the meeting itself. Perhaps the idea of a "resources index" could be revived, with emphasis on the secondary cities. Such an index could be organized by subjects rather than by communities and be designed to give the program officer a quick source of concise information on unique and special resources in the various fields. This is a big job, but perhaps some of the manpower and enthusiasm which is being under-utilized in these secondary cities could be used for this purpose. A first step might be to set up a small committee of representatives of sending agencies and secondary cities to discuss the problem, define categories of unusual resources in particular demand, establish a format and procedure for the index, etc.

Although perhaps an unduly alarmist view should be avoided, if the current emphasis on shorter grants continues the difficulties of finding time for visits to secondary cities will become a great deal more serious in the coming year. Given the fact of program officer dissatisfaction with the programming situation in a number of the largest cities (as we shall see in the following section), program officers certainly do not lack motivation to arrange secondary city visits wherever feasible. Yet they need help, from COSERV and the communities themselves, in identifying the assets of these cities.

#### Operational Problems in the Major Cities

Having now considered the factors which limit the role of smaller and medium-sized cities, we now come to what I believe is the core of the problem of community services to international visitors in the later 1960's - the group of twenty cities which accounted for 78% of the community visits by our visitors last year.

Our recent survey showed that our total use of the "Top Twenty" cities increased between 1960 and 1966 in almost direct proportion to the increase in the number of visitors. It seems important to underline the fact that our statistical average visitor of today is not spending more time in the top twenty cities than his 1960 counterpart; the problem is that he is spending less time elsewhere, and these larger cities thus represent a higher percentage of his total time in the U.S.

Moreover, our use of some of the individual cities on the top twenty list has increased more rapidly than others. Our total use of the eight most frequently visited cities (Washington, New York, ~~San~~ *San Antonio, Alice Springs* ~~Francisco~~, Los Angeles, Miami and Chicago) increased since 1960 in almost direct proportion to the increase in the number of visitors,

although within this Big Eight category the most significant increase was in the cities where the sponsorship situation had improved since 1960 and the lowest percentage of increase was in the city where the sponsorship situation has deteriorated significantly since 1960. However, the average growth rate for the Big Eight cities was by no means matched by the average for the remaining twelve cities on the top twenty list. Each of these twelve cities (Phoenix, Denver, Detroit, Knoxville, Buffalo, San Juan, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, Houston, Dallas and Atlanta) gets most of its visitors because of some one magnet attraction; these magnets are a matter of scenery, local color and/or regional atmosphere in most cases. Our statistics thus suggest that, with the dramatic exceptions of the Grand Canyon and the Rocky Mountains, our average 1966 visitor had less interest in (or at least less time for) scenery, local color and regional atmosphere than his 1960 counterpart.

As a result of the lower growth rate of these second echelon cities, which averaged 27% more visits as compared to 43% more visits for the Big Eight cities, the relative role of the Big Eight cities has been further increased. Visits to these eight cities accounted for 57% of all visits by CAI visitors in FY 1966. It has become fashionable in this field to deplore the already great role of larger cities and to express the view that geographic diversification should be our major goal. However, as we have seen in the previous sections of this paper, geographic diversification is restricted by a number of factors. The increasingly specialized and serious visitor of today is drawn toward a few major cities by many forces. These are the cities in which one is most likely to find the unique and special institutions, the headquarters of various national organization, the main offices of major industrial firms, the special research institutes and many of the most important universities and colleges. These are also the cities that have the larger number of Americans who speak foreign languages, have lived and worked abroad and have some knowledge of and interest in the visitor's home country.

For all these reasons, it seems to me that we must face squarely the fact that a few major cities are now playing a very crucial role in this program and that the relative role of these cities will be even greater in the foreseeable future due to shorter total visits. If one accepts the inevitability of this role, it immediately becomes important to consider whether these major cities are adequately organized and staffed to play this role effectively.

It is the main thesis of this paper that these major cities are not, on the whole, adequately organized and staffed for this crucial role. It seems to me that the operational deficiencies of these groups in the major cities fall into three major categories: limited operational flexibility, limited familiarity with local resources and over-emphasis on hospitality and sightseeing. Each of these will be discussed in a separate section below.

## 1. Limited Operational Flexibility

Recently I was re-reading a paper written some years ago in which we were describing the process by which each visitor's program takes shape. We pointed out that the emphasis was on flexibility. No plans were made for the visitor, aside from a few Washington appointments, until he arrived in Washington. Once here, the visitor and the program officer developed a plan of travel which was based on rather general ideas about what the visitor would do in each community, plus a few more specific requests made by the visitor. The responsibility for implementing this plan, i.e., for turning a general plan into a specific schedule of appointments and activities, was delegated to the local sponsor in each community.

This delegation was based on two important assumptions. The first was the local sponsor knew far more about the resources of his or her own community than the program officer and thus should be the one to make the specific decisions about how to implement the general plan in specific terms. The second assumption was that it was neither really possible or even desirable to attempt to decide in Washington, often several weeks in advance, in too much detail what the visitor should do when he arrived in each community. Among other problems, one never knew whether some programming in a previous community related to a specific interest would satisfy that interest (and thus eliminate it as a programming interest for subsequent communities) or whether the visitor's appetite for more experience and information on that subject.

The program officer tried to tell the sponsor as much as possible about the visitor and his interests and made a number of general (and perhaps a few specific) suggestions; the sponsor made a few tentative plans, but retained a large measure of flexibility until the visitor arrived and the tentative program could be discussed with him.

As time has gone by this "large measure of flexibility" has been more and more reduced until it has virtually disappeared in the larger number of the most frequently visited cities. To a greater and greater extent local sponsors insist that the programming agencies give them a detailed request for specific activities in the community. These requests form the basis for a pre-planned local program which the visitor receives in writing upon arrival. While some gesture is usually made in the direction of flexibility (i.e., some indication of willingness to consider changes in the program), the visitor often realizes that new requests and requests for the cancellation of activities already planned are both rather unwelcome.

With this development goes a further phenomenon which is becoming more common, the visit which takes place without the sponsor ever seeing the visitor. Some sponsors, particularly those whose offices are not too centrally located, see no reason to see the visitor personally if he indicates over the phone (or via his escort-interpreter) that he is satisfied with his pre-planned program.

The most common reason for total pre-planning stated by local sponsors is that there just isn't time to arrange much that is useful after the visitor arrives. Again, the ugly word time raises its head. Here we are talking about two kinds of time. On the one hand, sponsors refer to the increasing reluctance of useful community contacts to see visitors on short notice. However, this has always been a problem with genuinely busy people. One suspects that more and more Americans who have seen many visitors in the past are using short notice as an excuse to avoid seeing visitors; it is always easy to say that you would have been happy to see someone next week when you know that he is only going to be in town this week. It is worth asking whether there is so big a difference in this respect between these other large cities and Washington, where the larger part of the visitor's local schedule is arranged after he arrives. Certainly Washington local programs are no less dependent on genuinely busy people. The difference is perhaps that the Washington program officer, who is also the Washington local sponsor, knows that he just must find some time for last-minute arrangements in the crucial hours after the visitor's arrival.

This brings us to the second way that time enters into the necessity for pre-planning in most larger cities. The plain fact is that many local sponsors in larger cities are simply not in a position to arrange significant program activities after the visitor's arrival. This would require the sponsor to sit down and talk with the visitor upon his arrival and then immediately spend some time making calls to fill in the remaining blanks in the visitor's local schedule; unfortunately, this is rarely possible these days in many of the most frequently visited cities. Few of these local sponsors can concentrate for very long on any one visitor, with visitors pouring in from all directions. A schedule can be put together in advance as time can be found to make the necessary calls, but no one can count on having time to do much for the visitor after he arrives.

Despite a lot of talk about adjusting local programs to changed visitor interests, this lack of local flexibility means that very little real attention is being paid to changes in the visitor's interests which take place as his program progresses. It also often means that an activity of only general interest to the visitor is planned instead of one that is relevant to his keenest special interest, because identifying a local resource relevant to the visitor's special interest would have required a substantive discussion with the visitor after his arrival.

## 2. Limited Familiarity with Local Resources

There is considerable evidence that the familiarity of local programming personnel with the resources of their own communities has often been too limited in many of the larger cities.

Through no fault of the incumbents, the staffing of Department of State Reception Centers mainly with Foreign Service personnel on

two-year assignments means that at any given moment too many of the Reception Center officers are relatively new at their jobs. Elsewhere the turnover is scarcely less significant, if less predictable. In most of the large cities the salary levels for staff positions are hardly conducive to long-term employment, and positions tend to be filled by women who move on after a time due to marriage, family-building, the transfer of husbands, or offers of more lucrative employment. This staff turnover operates alongside a built-in turnover in most of the positions occupied by volunteers in local organizations. The kind of continuity provided by long-service chairmen in such cities as Buffalo and Dallas is the exception to the general rule. Effective programming of foreign visitors in a wide variety of fields requires a knowledge of local resources in a wide variety of fields; few people who move into staff or volunteer programming positions bring this knowledge with them, and the relatively rapid turnover means that the experience developed on the job tends to be lost all too quickly.

Thus the old idea that the local sponsor knew his or her own community best has been diluted by repeated disappointments. Program officers now often feel that the only way to get a first-rate program for a visitor is to give the sponsor rather precise instructions which have emerged from discussions between the visitor, the program officer, and various experts and advisers. As a result, the relationship between the program officer and local sponsor becomes one of planner and executor rather than of equal partners in a joint enterprise.

In GAI, where we have emphasized area and functional specialization by program officers in recent years, we have tried to maximize the number of situations where the program officer can identify persons or institutions in specific communities who have something to give a particular category of visitors. Nonetheless, the trend toward local sponsor dependence on specific program officer recommendations often forces the program officer to make decisions which cannot be properly made at the beginning of the visit and/or which require him to have a knowledge of local resources beyond that which can reasonably be expected.

In most cases the program officer can have only a general notion of the inherent resources (and, most importantly, the really available resources) of any one community, since he must be generally informed about the resources of communities throughout the nation. While he has access to a great deal of resource information in written form, he has little time to consult these written materials except on the most obvious and important questions. Thus, program ideas or contact suggestions which the visitor receives from someone on a rather casual basis often play a role which is out of all proportion to their merit or relevance to his interests. Similarly, the program officer, anxious to provide specific suggestions to the local sponsor, frequently requests the further use of some local resource which he would not even have remembered if it had not already been quite frequently used (and thus possibly overused) for other visitors. The local sponsor is also caught in a vicious circle; if

he doesn't have time to explore new resources for a particular visitor he loses the resulting additional knowledge of local resources which could have been most useful when the next visitor with similar interests comes along.

### 3. Over-Emphasis on Hospitality and Sightseeing.

For a variety of reasons, many of the local groups have apparently put more emphasis on the recruiting and training of volunteers for home hospitality and sightseeing purposes than on the development of professional or other substantive resources. The recruiting of potential hostesses and/or escorts can be done through a variety of channels and is a logical function for a volunteer chairman; on the other hand, the development of useful contacts in a complicated subject-matter field presents problems less easily solved by volunteers (or staff members, for that matter) who have no special background in that field. Although it has become part of the mystique of international visitor programs that home hospitality is virtually the key to universal success with visitors, some people feel that hospitality per se can be over-emphasized in relation to other aspects of the visitor's experience. I am afraid that at times COSERV has contributed to this over-emphasis on recruiting hostesses and escorts, in part because this was thought to be the one really common problem faced by the widely differing communities invited to most of COSERV regional conferences.

There is reason to believe that the increasingly effective system for handling home hospitality and sight-seeing in a number of communities has sometimes actually had a negative effect on the visitor's substantive programs. If a local group has a list of eager hostesses and escorts, there is apparently a temptation to fill in a good deal of the visitor's time with sightseeing and hospitality before getting down to the visitor's substantive interests. This problem is most acute when the length of the visitor's stop in the city is quite short. If a visitor goes to a city for only two days, he often finds that most or all of one of those days is taken up by sight-seeing and hospitality, whether the program officer asked for it or not. This emphasis on touristic activities may not disappoint the visitor; these larger cities have many sights which are well worth seeing, and the fact that countless other visitors have seen Muir Woods does not make it any less interesting for a particular visitor. Nonetheless, there are visitors who find the balance between touristic and substantive activities too heavily weighted on the touristic side. One unusually frank and thoughtful European visitor recently wrote that:

As things now seem to stand, the visitors might be presented with some kind of a standard program, which will maybe give satisfaction to their liking for tourism, but which will remain much on this side of some real exploitation of opportunities, in the interest of both the visitor, and at longer term, of the United States' external relations.

Even if the visitor is quite happy with his local program, the program officer is often frustrated to find that the rather substantive and serious program he envisioned for a visitor in theory became a good deal less substantive and serious in practice. Of course, some visitors simply lack the background or motivation to make a really serious inquiry into any aspect of American life, but, as we have seen above, such visitors are happily a good deal rarer than they used to be.

### Conclusion

Each of the operational problems discussed above is a function of or directly related to the insufficient supply of experienced personnel in local programming units. Whether programmers are too few or too new or both, the net effect is much the same: there isn't enough time to do the job properly. Flexibility is time-consuming, so local programming is rather inflexible. Learning local resources takes time, so many programmers lack familiarity with local resources. Developing serious and substantive programs takes time, so local programming tends to over-emphasize sightseeing and hospitality.

Some of the readers of this report may feel that this picture is overdrawn and that this is just the winter of my discontent. For the sake of the program, I hope they are right. Yet this paper is written at a moment when the programming apparatus in major cities is in considerable disarray; the local programming units in five out of the eight cities most frequently visited by GAI visitors have suffered recently or are about to suffer a major personnel setback which will inevitably reduce their capacity to mobilize community resources to maximum effectiveness. The director of one local unit has just been fired as a part of a local decision to return to an organizational and staffing pattern which proved inadequate in the period around 1960. Programming units in two other cities have new directors; one change was related to that group's continuing financial crisis, while the other results from a personnel policy that automatically rotates personnel just as they reach maximum effectiveness. Still another city is about to lose half of its experienced personnel because of the same policy. The organization in another city, which lost half of its experienced programmers not too long ago, has been surviving for some time mainly because programming agencies are able to divert from that city many visitors who ought to go there.

As a group, the persons who do the local programming of international visitors in major American cities work harder and with more dedication than most other comparable groups. However, in recent years changes in the size and nature of this program have created new pressures and new needs, especially in the largest cities, and the local programming organizations in these cities have not been expanded and strengthened to keep pace with these new needs and pressures. All of us involved in this process, on the national and local level, have been a little guilty in that we have failed to perceive and understand these changes that have been taking place and to sound the

alarm. Our excuse is that we have been too caught up in day to day efforts to make the best of each situation to look around us and see what has been happening. For my own part, I am certain that I would never have written this paper if I had not had a period of involuntary leisure followed by a period in which writing was feasible for the first time in years.

We have perhaps been lulled into a false sense of satisfaction or at least complacency by the fact that most visitors seemed reasonably happy with their local programs. However, we must keep two facts in mind. One is that the visitor is usually in no position to know what he missed. Even the visitor with quite definite objectives is normally very dependent upon his program officer and local sponsors for the arrangements which will accomplish those objectives. If he finds his local program pleasant and interesting he may not realize how much more interesting and useful it could have been. The other fact is that, in all but a few rare cases, the visitor's good manners prevent him from frank criticism of the local arrangements made for him. When we talk about efforts to evaluate our effectiveness, we must realize that the visitors won't help us much with this evaluation and that we are forced in the main to follow the difficult course of self-criticism.

Any effort in the direction of self-criticism in this field is unfortunately a pioneer effort. Although a certain amount of research related to these program has been conducted, mainly under government auspices, virtually all of this research has been designed to provide statistical proof for a proposition that is an article of faith for most of us: that short-term visitor programs generally contribute to attitudes favorable to the United States. Operational research, i.e., research that helps national or local programmers make more effective program decisions, is virtually unknown in this field. Essays or reflections by experienced programmers are equally rare, although I hope this essay will start a new trend.

The purpose of this paper was to stimulate thought and discussion, not to provide answers. Moreover, like everyone else in this field, I have become the victim of the time squeeze. I had hoped to write a concluding section which would outline at least briefly the steps that might be taken to examine and resolve some of the issues that I have tried to raise; however, I have had to lay that plan aside in order to make the main part of this paper available to the participants in the COSERV Workshop in Philadelphia, as indicated in the introduction. I shall be glad to have an opportunity to contribute these further thoughts in the immediate future, should this be considered useful by COSERV and/or the Department. Meanwhile, I will welcome the comments of the readers of this paper, whether or not they agree with it. I hope it is unduly pessimistic, but I fear that it is not.