



**I.I.A.A.**

BUILDING A BETTER HEMISPHERE SERIES NO. 15

*A Letter to the President*

**THE STORY OF THE 4-S CLUBS  
IN COSTA RICA**

From  
**PHILIP B. FLEMING**  
AMERICAN AMBASSADOR  
TO COSTA RICA



**POINT 4 IN ACTION**

**THE INSTITUTE OF INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS**

INTER-AMERICAN REGIONAL OFFICE

TECHNICAL COOPERATION ADMINISTRATION

# A Letter to

# THE PRESIDENT of The UNITED STATES

from PHILIP B. FLEMING

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR  
TO COSTA RICA

AMERICAN EMBASSY  
SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

April 14, 1952

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The attached parchment was presented to me, in your behalf, a few days ago by the 4-S Clubs of Costa Rica, and conveys to you the appreciation of the girls and boys of these Clubs, which correspond to our 4-H Clubs, for the contribution of the United States to the welfare of Costa Rica. The occasion of the presentation is the tenth anniversary of The Institute of Inter-American Affairs, and the parchment is signed by the various presidents of 4-S Clubs throughout the country. I think that the presentation of this parchment to you is a fine gesture on the part of these young people, and I feel sure you will appreciate the sentiment with which it is presented.

Recently, I attended a community fair sponsored by the 4-S Club at Pacayas, Costa Rica. In this community where family gardens were all but unknown, I saw an eleven-year-old boy without a tremor in his voice explain to a large audience the establishment and care of a family vegetable garden. I was conducted through two rooms of the community school which were literally overflowing with handiwork of these children—items of clothing and food prepared by the girls, and displays of crops, vegetables, home furnishing and labor-saving devices produced or constructed by the boy members of these clubs. Practically without exception these items represent a higher standard of living for these youngsters and their families and neighbors, who will learn from them.

Shortly after my arrival in Costa Rica, I received as a gift a crate of tomatoes from the 4-S Club members of the community of Palmares. These young people are producing tomatoes on a cooperative basis for sale to our troops in the Canal Zone. The boys work the land and construct the crates while the girls grade and pack the tomatoes and prepare them for air shipment. During the last three months of 1951, this project yielded a net profit of almost \$28,000, all of which remained in the community in the hands of these youngsters for future agricultural improvement and expansion.

I was very much interested in an article in The New York Times of April 1, on the tenth anniversary of The Institute of Inter-American Affairs. One does not fully recognize the great good accomplished by the IIAA and Point 4 until he sees it with his own eyes. Having been a soldier for forty years, my powers of observation are

pretty well developed. In about five months here I have travelled over the length and breadth of the land, and what I have learned of the accomplishments of these organizations astounds me.

One of the first things that came to my attention in Costa Rica was the technical assistance program for agriculture, jointly sponsored and financed by The Institute of Inter-American Affairs and the Government of Costa Rica. The heart of this program is an agricultural extension service similar to ours in the United States but adapted to local needs. Beginning with a small nucleus of IIAA technicians and a few Costa Ricans in early 1948, this extension service has grown to its present twenty-nine field offices located in all of the seven provinces of the country. These field offices are staffed by hand-picked, specially trained young men and women who work with all members of the rural family on specific problems of soil conservation, crop management, care of livestock and poultry, farm mechanization, gardening and food preservation, improvement of the home, and many other projects which tend to improve the standard of living in rural areas. This extension service is now staffed and directed 100 per-



CASH CROPS FOR KIDS: Future tomatoes to prevent fungus damage techniques which will make them be

cent by Costa Ricans, all of whom have received special in-service training for their jobs.

Recently, I accompanied the President of Costa Rica on an inspection trip to the northwestern provinces where, as a project of our technical assistance program, cotton is being grown on a commercial scale for the first time in Costa Rica. In these cotton fields I saw farm laborers productively employed during a season of the year when there is normally no market for labor, and I saw farmers realizing a handsome profit from land which had previously produced very little. As a result of this project, small industries such as cotton gins, small textile mills and oil extracting mills are being established in the country, and better livestock feeding is being made possible by the utilization of the oil mill byproducts.

While flying over the countryside on this trip the President pointed to abandoned slopes which were being reclaimed by terracing and contour farming, as recommended to the farmers by the extension agents. He called our attention to large fields of rice and other crops being farmed with modern tractors, and to smaller farms on which the oxen and wooden plows were being replaced by horses and more efficient steel plows. I was given the very interesting information that used horse-drawn plows had been brought by the IIAA from farms in the United States and again put to work in this country. I was told the experience of a small subsistence farmer who, with the use of horses and this second-hand machinery, realized a profit from one crop of cotton sufficient to pay for his machinery, to purchase a new American-made jeep, and to hire heavy equipment to clear several acres of additional farm land.

I wish to emphasize that all these activities are not carried on through unilateral action on the part of the United States, but rather are effected by coordinated action of responsible agencies representing the people of the United States on the one hand, and the citizens of Costa Rica on the other, jointly working for the permanent

well-being of both countries. The financial contributions of the Costa Rican government to projects of STICA and SCISP, as the cooperative organisms of the IIAA are called, total \$1,052,500 since 1948 in relation to \$700,000 paid by the United States Government.

The public health and preventative medicine activities of SCIP were re-established in March, 1951. With the appearance of a yellow fever epidemic in Costa Rica in May, 1951, the United States Air Force loaned the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Health a helicopter, and in eleven days 976 persons were vaccinated against yellow fever in an area of 6,000 square miles. Up to the present time over 200,000 people have been vaccinated against this disease. Another interesting project of this organization of the IIAA, carried out in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Public Health, was the improvement in the teaching staff in the School for Nurses, thereby filling a great need in the country. Improvements have also been made in the water and sewage systems of Costa Rica, and in cooperation with the 4-S Clubs and other groups, an active campaign is being carried out to combat intestinal parasites and diseases spread by improper sanitation.

Following Point Four objectives, the educational programs are also being intensified, including both in-service training and technical training in the United States, with the idea of eventually replacing American technicians with Costa Ricans. In this connection, applications are now being processed for some sixteen Costa Ricans to receive technical training during 1952 with the various agencies of the United States Government.

To complete the picture, I should also mention the splendid work of the United States Department of Agriculture which has been conducting very interesting and profitable experiments in rubber production at "Los Diamantes" and elsewhere, as well as the work it has undertaken to control coffee plant diseases.

With all of the activities placed under one head and a Director of Technical Cooperation having been appointed, the reaction here can be expressed in one word—"Magnifico". We are indeed fortunate in having Mr. Howard Gabbert, the individual who was selected for this job. He is beloved and respected by Costa Ricans and Americans alike. He has almost daily conferences with us here in the American Embassy and works closely with us.

The construction of the Inter-American Highway has opened up large acreages of fertile land heretofore inaccessible to agricultural production. As the road is pushed through to Nicaragua and Panama, the wealth of this small democracy-loving country will be increased more and more.

I haven't been long in the Foreign Service, so that I am not sure if a letter from an Ambassador to the President is appropriate. But you sent me here as your representative and I am aware of your personal interest in Point Four so I am taking a chance that it won't offend protocol.

Respectfully yours,

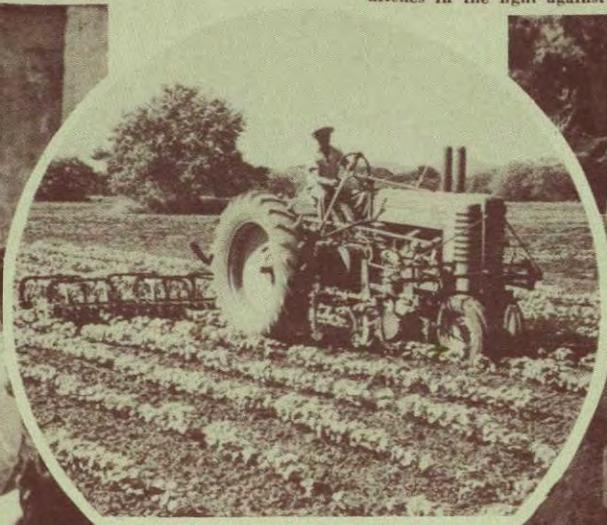
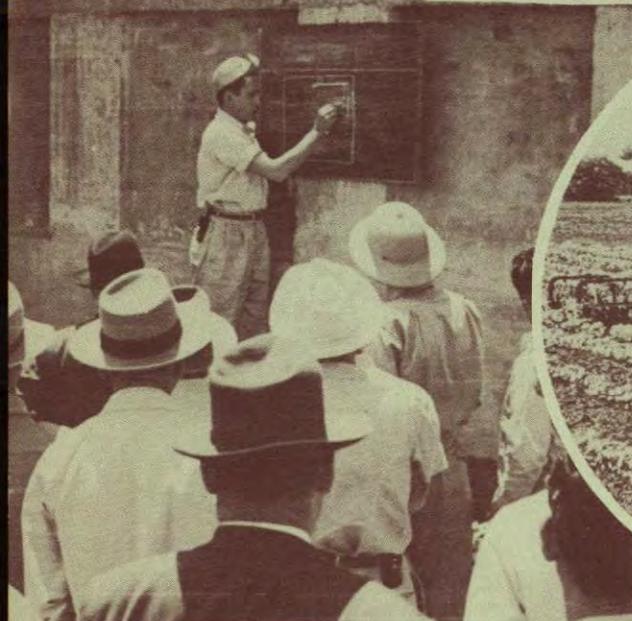
PHILIP B. FLEMING,  
*American Ambassador to Costa Rica.*



rs of Alajuela learn about spraying  
ICA agents teach 4-S club members  
rners than their parents were

SHARING TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW:  
Arturo Lizano, STICA Extension  
Agent, diagrams irrigation system  
to coffee growers.

SOIL CONSERVATION NEW TO  
COSTA RICA: José Vasquez, Pal-  
mares 4-S club member, operates  
simple machine to construct hillside  
ditches in the fight against erosion.



NEW MACHINES FOR NEW CROPS:  
Power machinery builds a cotton in-  
dustry. Scarce dollars formerly  
used to buy textiles now buy ma-  
chinery for cotton and other needed  
crops.

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