3. Aspecten van maatschappelijke opbouw

Emancipation and revaluation of community development principles

with special regard to underdeveloped countries

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Introduction

During my stay in Ethiopia I was a participant in the first Workshop on Community Development — henceforward shortly called c.d. — organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (sponsored by the United Nations).


This report is remarkable for its comprehensive, yet very clear and realistic approach to c.d. problems. Still, some critical comments on some paragraphs are not out of place. These critical notes are a result of my Ethiopian experience in c.d. and a confrontation of the theories with the findings and outcome in the practical field.

Part I is dealing with "the concept of c.d."; part II with "the person and the work of the c.d." (village level) worker, while in part III an effort will be made upon a revaluation of c.d. principles, in order to come to a new approach in c.d. and technical assistance matters.

I. Concept of Community Development.

"It was generally recognized, that c.d. is concerned with changing such attitudes and practices as are obstacles to social and economic improvements, engendering particular attitudes which are conducive to these improvements and more generally promoting a greater receptivity to change" (conclusion 21 of the report on the Workshop).

The main implication of c.d. is: to change the attitude of the people. This goes di-

1) From April 1958 till August 1960 the author, associate expert of Unesco, served in Ethiopia as a vice-director and director of the Majite Community Development Training Center. Due to the situation of this center in a rather remote area of Ethiopia, he had ample opportunity for a study not only of the methods, taught in the center, but also to observe their applications and outcome in the field: the students were engaged in practical fieldwork in the surrounding villages and communities.

Moreover he acted six months as supervisor of all community development activities in Begemder, the largest northern province of Ethiopia, where he was assigned to the staff of the Haile Selassi I Public Health College and Training Center in the capital of Gondar. The circa 400 students of this college were also engaged in this kind of practical activities in the field of health and sanitation.
rectly to the heart of the matter: the acceptance of innovations. How can we make people accept new ideas by which they can benefit? Psychology has taught us, that behaviour is an effort of the individual to adjust himself to his surroundings. Logical as this may seem, technical assistance programs often overlook this simple, basic rule. They try to adjust people to other surroundings than their own, to other worlds, other societies, other standards, other ways of living than their own. Psychology has also taught us, that all behaviour is motivated by needs, physical and emotional. People act in order to satisfy their needs. Their own, and not somebody else's needs in the first place. It is clear then that people, once they do not feel the need for sanitary or agricultural improvements, for better housing schemes and the like, they will stay aloof from any advice and help. They are not motivated to acceptance. The primary task of c.d. then becomes, to change the needs of the people; if this need is present (before or after the introduction of c.d. techniques) the changing of beliefs and attitudes may be expected to follow more or less automatically. Without this, any development program will fail, regardless of money and efforts put into it.

At this point 3 comments seem necessary: 1) the person of the c.d. worker must be a highly qualified student in the social sciences; 2) there are 2 sides of the problem of changing the needs and attitudes of the people, one being the giving, one the receiving side; 3) the necessity of changing people's attitude is not confined to the concept of c.d. only; it concerns any type of (technical) assistance.

Ad 1) This rule seems so logical, yet in many countries there are c.d. workers of roundabout 20 years of age (and therefore immature to do c.d. work) with an educational background of no more than elementary school (which is hardly any base at all) and who are trained in a course that often lasts no longer than 3 to 6 months!

For more than 20 years psychology and sociology have occupied themselves with the technique of changing needs, beliefs and attitudes. I need only to give the example of racial prejudice. So far, the outcome of all their efforts is not very encouraging. If this can be said about learned people that have dedicated years of their life to scientific research, it becomes most doubtful whether ordinary persons, without an adequate background and training in this field, will ever succeed. C.d. should be considered an art, a science, but never a skill, whose principles can be mastered within an unreasonable short time, by persons without a scientific background. The person of the c.d. worker, either in the field, at village level, or at the supervisory level, must be a thoroughly trained person in the field of the social sciences and techniques. Without this background, he remains the amateur that can do more bad than good.

Many c.d. programs have failed and are still failing in this respect. Many c.d. courses in underdeveloped countries still put the accent on practical activities and problems of a technical nature, forgetting that the most important part is the human side of the problem. More about this later on.

Ad 2) There are 2 sides of the problem of changing the needs and attitudes of people, one side being the innovator, the person bringing about the changes that are required and on the other side the receiver of the new ideas, i.e. the people. So far this concept has not always been
recognized and yet it is elementary. The people that are going to receive help, deserve our attention as much as the person and the work of the innovator. More about the innovator sub 3 next; here the receiving side will be considered.

In social psychology, the importance of cultural determinants in developing and change of attitudes and beliefs has been stressed many times. In this respect, the importance of „education” (or educational background) as one of the outstanding cultural determinants, has been proved by many experiments. In those experiments, people with different educational backgrounds (representing various grades in education) were tested on special selected questions. The result showed that more satisfactory answers were got from students with college education than from students (or other category of respondents) who completed high school education — and those persons in turn gave better answers than people who completed only grade-school education2). This means that the educational background of people is co-decisive in the matter of (development and) change of attitudes, which in turn is the most important aspect of c.d. In simple terms, the outcome of these experiments can, for our purpose, be translated as such: one does not learn how to read a book without the fundamental knowledge of the alphabet, one does not study mathematics without a knowledge of the fundamentals of arithmetic.

This seems logical, and the implications are far reaching: many people are not yet ripe (or ready) for development programs of many kind, because they lack the basic education, required to grasp new ideas — however simply put — and to change their needs accordingly. They do not understand the alphabet, so they are unable to read.

In providing new knowledge, we almost always start from already existing knowledge; if no basic knowledge is available, the atmosphere for change is unfavorable. During my stay in Ethiopia I have had ample opportunity to find out the truth of this rule, that also the receiving side must be ready, or more or less ready, to receive. The first training course in the Majite c.d. center started with students of a very low educational background: no particular requirements were made. Most of them had only completed 2nd, 3d or 4th grade elementary school, only 2 had completed 6th grade. After almost 1½ year of training these students had still no clear-cut idea of c.d. and later on they proved to be more or less helpless in the field (with a few notable exceptions). In this example, the students at the course represent the receiving side of new techniques and ideas. For the second course, students were selected by a special committee and only 8th grade students were accepted; in the third year the center was training students with a minimum level of 10th grade.

One thing stood out clearly, not only amongst the students, but also amongst the villagers with whom we worked: the higher the primary or basic education of the receiver, the easier the acceptance of the new skills and ideas proved to be. The needs of the 10th graders changed quicker than those of the 8th graders, who in turn accepted new ideas quicker than the 6th graders. Students and villagers, with hardly any basic education at all, did not respond and we could scarcely see any improvement at all.

This implies, that also the receiving side of (technical) assistance must have some elementary knowledge before it can ac-

cept new ideas and techniques. Often it has been put forward, that c.d. and other assistance programs should start operations in those regions, where people need this aid most of all: in the most backward areas, amongst the most ignorant people to be found in the area. The above outlined theory comes exactly to the opposite conclusion. In these backward areas as a rule there are too many hindrances to overcome: too many superstitions, customs, traditions, suspicion, influence of witchcraft, etc. Mostly they are a result of ignorance, because of a lack of basic knowledge.

What should be the first, basic step in those backward areas, which step is easier than any other solution, is: to bring elementary education to those areas. All the government's efforts should be concentrated on the point of having elementary schools everywhere in the country, before starting there any other type of assistance program. These schools can teach children (and probably adults in nightclasses) the basic elements of primary education; by, let us not forget it, well-trained rural teachers, who understand their task and responsibilities and who teach a new type of curriculum, adjusted to the needs of these particularly backward areas.

Technical aid and also c.d. then can be started in the more advanced regions of the country, where people will respond more readily and easily. This method of starting the basic type of education may seem a much time consuming process, but the results will ultimately prove to be more profitable. People with a sound background will respond more quickly to innovations, aimed at the development of the country and at the welfare of the people. It also saves the innovators a lot of trouble, disappointment and frustration. Summing up I want to state that:

a) without the proper need, there is no base for changing someone's belief or attitude. First of all we have to create new needs or change people's needs to lay a firm foundation for future action;

b) where people are eager for new and better ways of living, they provide a condition favorable for change. People that are more or less satisfied with the status quo and are suspicious of innovations — often because they are afraid to lose their own position or fear a disturbance in the social equilibrium — are not a fruitful base for change. Old and conservative people, clinging heavily to their traditions, are equally unfavorable to change;

c) the existing amount of knowledge is an important condition for change, because new ways of doing things always build on already existing forms;

d) communications provide another condition for change. Good communications are essential for a quick spreading of new ideas \(^3\).

The proper areas to start technical assistance are those, where this type of basic education is present and has been present for a number of years. The condition sub d) points more or less directly to the areas alongside the main traffic lines, the highways of the country; there one also finds the first elementary schools. Progress starts mostly alongside these lines of communication. Here the people come more often in contact with „civilization” not only, but are also able to grasp its profits and to act accordingly.

ad 3) (the necessity of changing the attitude of the people is not confined to the concept of c.d. but concerns any type of (technical) assistance). Much technical assistance, be it by F.A.O., W.H.O. or

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other institutions dealing with technical aid (the term “technical aid” by the way is inadequate and often misleading) bears no fruit, because it has neglected the most essential part of its aiding program: the human factor, the human approach. What is the real task of the innovator? Is it enough that he knows about the modern ways of farming, that he knows about animal husbandry and that he can tell the symptoms of a disease and knows how to treat it — when, at the same time, he does not understand the farmer, the cattleholder or the patient? Is not the human side of the problem much more essential?

The truth however is, that hundreds of schools turn out professionally skilled graduates, that have no idea of the real task ahead and of the demands, the needs and the way of thinking of the people they are supposed to help. Since the graduate does not understand this, he is quite helpless. He has been trained in many ways, but not in the most important technique: how to deal with people and make them accept his ideas.

It is not the fault of those graduates, but of the institutions and schools whose main concern has been: „how many graduates do we turn out this year?” Once I visited an up-to-date, well equipped agricultural school, having been in operation for at least 7 years. The school turned out a satisfactory number of students each year. There was nothing wrong with teachers, students or equipment—but only with the curriculum. The first thing I looked for were remarkable changes in the way the people in the close vicinity of the school farmed their lands. They almost daily could witness the school demonstrations in (modern) farming. If ever, one would expect those farmers living so close to the school and seeing for themselves, to copy the methods propagated by that institution. Alas, no such remarkable changes were to be noted, farmers had continued to farm in the same old way as before, the cattle was just as bad or good as anywhere else in the country, the crops were not higher, the fields were not better.

When it appears, that whole centers of education with their staff and equipment fail to reach the people, is there any hope that individual (agricultural extension) workers can be expected to produce better results, being sent into backward areas with often hardly any equipment and demonstration material at all? Psychology and sociology — the human approach — are mostly not the subjects that are being taught in those schools and colleges. Yet I believe it is of the utmost necessity to put them on the curriculum of any institution that teaches (technical) assistance in whatever form, to improve the social and economic conditions in the rural and underdeveloped areas. As such, the idea of „changing attitudes and beliefs” is not confined to the concept of c.d. only, but covers the whole field of technical assistance.

II. The person and work of the C.D. agent.

Under the heading „recruitment and training of personnel” the report on the Workshop of c.d. sums up the following recommendations:

a) that a distinction be made between higher executive personnel (administration and technicians), field personnel and voluntary workers;

b) that special attention be given to the selection and training of personnel, on which the efficiency of c.d. depends;

c) that selection be based on personal interview, psychological tests, when available, and probation, so that the personal
qualities and aptitudes required of the candidates, can be ascertained:

d) that higher executive personnel be university-educated, with the addition of a degree or diploma in the social sciences or of orientation in c.d. and that field-workers have elementary, post-elementary or secondary schooling, according to the level at which they are supposed to work and be trained for a period of 6 months to 2 years, in subjects including team work, discussion leading, program planning, techniques of community study and the educational approach to c.d.

I can underline the principles sub a, b and c. But the points sub d show a lack of sense of reality; the more so, when one finds later on in the report some notes about the character of the c.d. worker, about his training and the future role and functions he is to play in the field.

It is my firm opinion — regardless of the level at which a c.d. worker is supposed to work! — that elementary schooling is not enough, neither a training time of 6 months. Moreover, the distinction between higher executive personnel and the fieldworkers has been too sharply drawn. The c.d. village level worker comes certainly more in contact with the real life problems of villagers, he participates more in their activities and therefore should know at least as much about the human approach and the social sciences as that higher personnel that mostly works in offices outside the field. Let us see how the report views the work and the person of the c.d. worker: what he must do and what he must be.

„It was recognized, that all c.d. workers should possess certain personal and professional qualities. Personal qualities include faith in c.d. work, steadfastness of character, ability to work „with“ rather than „for“ people, to stand back at the proper time and to induce people to organize themselves. In addition, workers should be as far as possible of rural origin and mature enough to command respect. While recognizing that it is not easy to find staff endowed with all these qualities, it was recommended that the candidates' ability to adapt themselves to working conditions, be ascertained by means of personal interviews, aptitude tests, whenever available, and closely supervised periods of probation”.

And about the task of the future c.d. worker: „Special efforts be made to establish confidence and lasting co-operation between c.d. workers and the people, bearing in mind that the success of such co-operation depends on a number of factors, including a knowledge of the environment, of local traditions and of psychological factors, as well as ability to discover the natural leaders and to establish institutions, through which the people can express their needs and wishes. Within the pattern of this co-operation it will generally be desirable to set up institutions through which the ideas and wishes of the people may be expressed or to encourage such institutions where they exist. They may be traditional or informal organizations and may include village-councils, committees or rural development societies; or they may be legally instituted bodies, created with the consent of the people, such as the local government authorities. Local government organizations can provide the necessary maintenance for the services, created by c.d.; conversely, c.d. can create attitudes in the public, favourable to the organic growth of local government organizations”.

„In regard to the technical processes involved in establishing and carrying out
c.d. programmes, a procedure was suggested entailing the following range of operations:

a) the initial survey of the area
b) the study of specific sectors or problems, designed to discover, on the one hand, what the people do, know and think about the problem and, on the other hand, what the technicians have in mind

c) practical research or experimentation, designed to test the validity of solutions proposed
d) extension and popular education through discussion groups, demonstrations, visits, and the use of audiovisual media
e) the planning, costing and execution of projects
f) the execution of projects
g) the analysis of the results”.

Certainly, this is a good view on the role and functions of a c.d. worker. But as certainly it is a gigantic task, often to be performed by one single man, far away in the field and cut off from the direct contact with superiors, technicians or departments involved. This task takes on more shape, when most c.d. literature mentions that the real aim of a c.d. worker must be, to make himself superfluous, that he must spot the natural leader within the community itself, to take over and continue his jobs when he has left the area for another assignment.

Do the participants in the Workshop really believe that a man, with no more background than elementary schooling and a hasty course of 6 months in community development methods, can duly perform this task?

The report also mentions a worthwhile assistant of the c.d. worker: the rural teacher. „The (rural) teacher, since he generally possesses knowledge of local conditions and enjoys the confidence of the people, can play an important part outside the school, by helping the c.d. workers, where they exist, or by preparing the way for their future assignment. Furthermore, in the rural school itself, the teacher can help to promote c.d. by instilling into the children a desire to take part in such activities. This raises the problem of adapting the school to local conditions”. The report has a realistic view on this co-operation between teacher and c.d. worker: „some delegations pointed out, that the teacher sometimes appears to be unwilling to co-operate, since he considers that such activities are beyond his responsibilities as an educator. The participants agreed that, through appropriate training, teachers should be led to a better understanding of their role in the society”. This is quite true, I have often personally met a number of these uncooperative teachers. They are hardly to blame. The main reasons for his unwillingness to co-operate are:

a) he has not had the proper training
b) therefore he does not understand the aims of c.d.
c) there is a kind of professional jealousy between the teacher and the c.d. worker, because the latter often earns a higher salary and often is dealing too much with strict educational schoolwork
d) the teacher’s extra services and his active co-operation are not paid for (when, for example, he teaches in nightclasses).

In this light their attitude becomes quite understandable. If the teacher sacrifices his spare time, he should be extra paid; if the teacher does more or less the same job
as the c.d. worker (literacy-programs!) he ought to get the same salary; if he has had a longer training time (a teacher-training course often lasts for 2 years and over, a c.d. course for 6 months) he has the right to a better reward.

The closest attention should be paid to the last lines of the report, dealing with the (rural) teacher. "Through appropriate training, teachers should be led to a better understanding of their role in the society". This confirms what I stated earlier, that rural teachers should work with a new type of curriculum, adjusted to the needs of rural (backward) areas. I also agree with the following recommendations: "The participants also considered, how children and young people can contribute to c.d. As far as children are concerned, it was argued that schools should not only provide formal education, but should also be adapted to local requirements and provide the children with opportunities to participate, in and out of the school, in educative activities, particularly those which have direct relation to c.d. Various suggestions were put forth, in order to encourage the participation of young people: first, school education should be improved, so that young people do not lose touch with their environment; secondly, efforts should be made to encourage future leaders, e.g. secondary school students or undergraduates, by types of training combining character-building with service to the community; by participating in c.d. activities, to recognize their own particular responsibility in forwarding the progress of their country and to bring about mutual understanding between the educated elite and the bulk of the population; thirdly, attempts should be made to absorb young people, who become ill adapted and drift away from home, into suitable vocations in the rural environment and to encourage them to participate in c.d. activities".

Coming back to the job of the c.d. worker: one can only be too glad that the report on the Workshop does not eagerly plunge into the usual standard list of detailed tasks of a c.d. worker, such as: "public works, like the building of roads, bridges and dams; in the field of health and sanitation: digging of latrines, provision of a clear drinkingwater-supply, better housing, better care of the body, improved food diet, prevention of diseases and control of communicable diseases; in the field of agriculture there is the long list, ranging from the prevention of erosion to the construction of the inevitable compost-pit (personally I have never seen any c.d. worker constructing one); in the field of "village crafts" there is always the same note about the "simple" skills of pottery, weaving, carpentry and metal making (why these skills are always called "simple" is beyond my comprehension); in the meantime the c.d. worker is supposed to start a daily school for children and nightclasses for adults; to take care of the local recreation, to organize a village market and several types of co-operatives, the most important one being the formers' co-operative.

Considering this rather naïve apprehension of the work of a c.d. worker, the conclusions in the report on the Workshop are a big step forward in the direction of a realistic view on c.d. techniques and methods.

We come now to the conclusions dealing with the training of the c.d. worker. "It was observed that, even though administrative or technical personnel may appreciate the importance of c.d. for their country's progress, they do not always have the training, required for this kind of social action. To give instructions and
orders is one thing, but to persuade people to change their attitudes and to make voluntary efforts is quite another. The Workshop found it difficult to lay down standards as to the duration and content of training to be undergone by supervisory personnel, but agreed that there should be orientation courses, in the case of both administrators and technicians with higher education, which should include knowledge of human behaviour, c.d. methods, group work techniques and methods of approaching communities. The training of fieldworkers should be mainly practical and should include rudimentary technical knowledge in certain basic crafts, team work, discussion leading, programming, planning, techniques of community study, the educational approach to c.d. and a knowledge of local customs. The training period should last from six months to 2 years. From this I deduce, that it does not seem necessary to train the field-worker also in „knowledge of human behaviour“ and „methods of approaching communities“. This is a serious mistake.

I have to repeat, that the fieldworker, more than the supervisory personnel, deals directly with the human material, participates in village life and village problems and that it is he who must do the real job.

To handle that job well, he must be trained accordingly — i.e. in the social sciences; and certainly as much as the supervisory personnel. To continue the report: „Training should be provided for suitable local leaders (progressive men and woman in the village) so as to enable them to give voluntary assistance to c.d. field workers and to carry on the movement after the latter has moved into new areas“. This remark is essential, but not in the way it has been stated here. I prefer to talk about the „official local leader“ — not the voluntary agent who hardly ever materializes in real life.

I will deal with the official local leader later.

III. Revaluation and summing up; an effort to come to a new approach of community development.

What to think of the following advertisement in one of the leading western newspapers: „Asked: boys of about 20 years of age; with no more former schooling than elementary education at 6th grade level; who are willing, after a training period of about 6 months, to go out into the most underdeveloped areas of Holland to perform the following tasks:

1) win the confidence of the people
2) try to be accepted as a leader and then try to advise the people in subject matters as agriculture, health and sanitation, education, public works, handicrafts and social welfare
3) change the attitude and beliefs of the people
4) find local leaders that can take over your job in due time, so that you can leave your post for a new assignment“. Such an advertisement has never been put and rightly so. It is unrealistic and naïve to think that boys of that age, with that background and training, would ever stand a ghost of a chance.

The more so when they deal not with Holland but with underdeveloped countries, where there are the following disadvantages: in many villages, one finds the most primitive state of affairs, uneducated, illiterate people who still firmly believe in witchcraft, medicinemen of doubtful reputation, and a hundred of different gods and superstitions to hinder progress; where the c.d. worker is asked to perform the vastest diversity of duties
ever asked of one single man, but often described as „simple skills”; where he has to win the confidence of people, often not belonging to his tribe and who therefore are most suspicious; people who are traditionally-conservative par excellence and regard every innovation as „the work of the devil”.
The c.d. idea should be undone of all emotional loaded idealism. Idealism is all very well, but in this case has hampered a real application of otherwise sound and fundamentally good principles; and, what is worse, has done no good to a lot of technical assistance programs undertaken in the past. If one recognizes the proper importance of c.d. for the future progress of the underdeveloped countries, it should be given its proper place and proper attention by any government in those countries.

A. The receiving side.

I have already stated the importance of cultural determinants in the development and change of attitudes and beliefs. People must be ready to accept technical and other assistance, and such can only be the case if a rudimentary, basic knowledge is present. „New ways of doing things always build on already existing forms” (provided they are there, I like to add) — and this is the most important condition for the change of attitudes and beliefs. Such knowledge can suitably be provided by a new type of rural elementary schools, staffed with well-trained rural teachers, that recognize the needs of the country (which are not always in harmony with or the same as the needs of the people) and their responsibilities as educators. This rural teacher must be paid accordingly. The role he plays in the future progress of his country is too important to overlook the basic question of an adequate salary.

Therefore he sacrifices too much, when he is willing to go „into the bush” while he can get a better duty-station somewhere else; in almost all underdeveloped countries there is a shortage of teachers. One has also to consider, that the teacher in a far-away post is due to be overlooked and forgotten when the time for his promotion is there.
The stated and seemingly logical condition for change implies, that technical assistance in the broad sense, incl. c.d., should not start in the most backward areas that are often the most remote and inaccessible parts of the country.
These areas are reserved for the new type of rural schools, that provide the basic knowledge essential for future progress. Better results with technical assistance can be expected in the more advanced regions, that still need help. Mostly then, in the villages alongside or not far away from the main roads. Communication lines play an important role in the process of change; moreover, they provide another condition for that change. For the technicians it has the undoubtful advantage of the possibility of direct contact with their superiors in the departments involved.

B. The giving side: the innovators.

Before turning to the c.d. worker, it must be stated, that innovators in almost all fields of techniques, ought to have a rudimentary knowledge of the application of their techniques in the human field. Too many ardent innovators became frustrated in the field, because, though they were well trained in a lot of theories and skills, they were not trained in the human approach. All schools, dealing with technical assistance in one way or another, should include the subjects „sociology” and „psychology” in their curricula. Even then it might be necessary that in the field the technicians call for the help of the c.d.
worker, the real specialist in village level work. Let us therefore turn now to the c.d. worker.
a) Quoting the Workshop report: „he must be mature enough to command respect”. This however is not always applied, many trainees in c.d. courses are below the age of 20 years; seldom one finds persons above 30. Needless to say that such people, especially in tradition-heavy countries, will never be considered mature enough to command respect. The minimum requirement is: 25 years, at which age his training can be started.
b) Pre-education of the c.d. student: considering the program in the training-centers and with special regard to the primary task of „changing the attitudes of the people” which requires a sound knowledge of social science, elementary schooling alone is never enough. That is an insufficient base on which to build further knowledge.
Secondary schooling stands as a minimum-level (with one probable exception: the true local leader, see later).
c) Subjects of a c.d. course. The main subjects in any c.d. course are the social sciences. They, and they only, provide the base for the student to grope his way through the labyrinth of human emotions, involved in the techniques of „changing people’s beliefs and attitudes”. Since even sociologists and psychologists are struggling with this problem, it is not expected that the c.d. worker will score immediate successes. But at least he has a clear notion of the difficulties facing him in the field. That notion will be his safeguard against frustration and deception.
There is one thing I should like to mention here. That is the degradation of c.d. by slogans as „the c.d. worker is a Mr. Know-all”, „a Jack of all trades” and by the statement: „he must be trained in some, basic, simple skills”. Agriculture, carpentry, pottery, weaving and metal works are not simple skills; unless one sees agriculture as the art of constructing compost-pits only. And no human being can ever become a Mr. Know-all.
There is still another danger in so far as these degrading terms deny the already existing knowledge — or skills — of even „ignorant” villagers. People, that have been farming for more than 10 or 20 years possess real knowledge about farming. Often they are good farmers and in any case better than the hastily trained c.d. worker, who has probably never done any actual farming.
Imagine now the c.d. agent — the „Mr. Know-all”, trained in some simple skills of farming — trying to convince that farmer of the necessity of manure to double his crops! For years that man has tried to get a higher yield of his fields, probably without much result. And suddenly there comes along someone to tell him what he should do! Maybe that farmer takes his time to listen to the c.d. worker, who has some faint theoretical knowledge about manure, compost-pits and the like, but who does not know all the many implications of agriculture. Within an hour the farmer has pumped the c.d. agent empty of all his knowledge, that is no more than an artificial layer at the surface. And the poor c.d. agent has lost his reputation for good.
Another consequence of these slogans is even more far-reaching. The c.d. agent, being called a „Mr. Know-all” rightly thinks he is somebody; and instead of considering himself the servant of the people, he thinks of himself as of the master of the people; which is not the proper attitude to approach villagers in underdeveloped countries. It can also be the cause of much
friction and professional jealousy between the c.d. worker and the expert technicians.

Is it then advisable to leave out all those subjects (agriculture, handicraft, rural health, etc.) from a c.d. course?

I do not think so. But they should not get that much attention in a course, where the accent has to be on the social sciences. The c.d. student still should get some training (theoretical and practical) in the other subjects, in order to be able to make a sound „initial survey”.

Without some rudimentary knowledge about agriculture and hygiene, he cannot report about agricultural and sanitary conditions in his area. The real task however of advice to farmers and other people be left to the experts, e.g. extension agents. In what cases there is room for him to advise the people, is difficult to say off-hand. I dare say we must leave this to himself, provided he has the proper background of training.

d) **Duration of the course.** A sound knowledge of the social sciences, besides a rudimentary knowledge about the other subjects, requires a training time of at least 3—4 years, rather than a period of 6 months — 2 years. Unless the trainees are graduated persons with a diploma in one of the social sciences, in which case the training can last less than 3 years.

The question can be raised, where the underdeveloped countries find the experts to teach those subjects in the c.d. training-courses and in the schools for technical aid (e.g. agricultural colleges).

In most cases, they have to turn to the western countries or to the U.N. for help. Teachers from abroad, however, do have one disadvantage: they do not know the language, customs, traditions etc. of the particular societies within that country.

How then to teach „ways to approach people” and „how to change the attitude of the people”?

America and Holland are very different from Ethiopia and Kongo and the approach to their problems is equally very different. It is only after the teacher-expert has got the time and opportunity to study the people, that he will pay his value. Seen against this background, it must be much regretted that most of the U.N. contracts with experts from western countries are short-term contracts, varying from 3 months to 1 or 2 years. At the time, that the expert becomes valuable, he has to leave the country; and the adjustment process of the next expert starts the same story all over again. The only remedy here, when long-term contracts are not feasible, is, that the foreign expert enters the governmental service of the underdeveloped country concerned. This guarantees the country his presence for the duration of his contract, that can be drawn up for a longer period.

The necessity of foreign teachers requires, that the expert from abroad immediately starts with the training of some persons of the country itself, who have the proper interest and background, so that they can take over the job after his departure. The job of the expert then becomes twofold: 1) teaching at c.d. courses 2) teaching — at university level — suitable native candidates to take over his job sub 1).

If this double task is too heavy a burden for the foreign expert, preference should be given to the second point, because a nucleus of well trained native teacher-experts is always more profitable and economical than a long, steady flow of incoming foreign experts.

Another solution naturally is to appoint two experts from abroad.
Role and function of the c.d. village level worker. The list given in the report on the Workshop of c.d. is a sound one. It ranges from "the initial survey" till "the analysis of the results". Such an initial survey is really the first task of any c.d. agent: before he starts his job, he has to find out what there has to be done. In this list the reader finds nothing back of the more common stereotypes of the c.d. literature. Yet these are important — and not in the last place because they often lead to wrong interpretations. I shall mention a few.

1) The c.d. worker must win the confidence of the people
2) he must be accepted as a leader of the people
3) he must promote the community spirit
4) he must promote the self-help of the people
5) he must advise and guide the people in a number of tasks
6) he must change the attitude of the people
7) he must find local (formal or informal) leaders who can take over his job when he leaves the area.

Ad 1). It has been stressed before but will be mentioned here again: a c.d. agent should be sent to areas and to people he knows; people that are of his own tribe, whose customs, language and idiosyncrasies he understands. Otherwise the agent has to overcome a mountain of suspicion and will not win people's confidence so easily.

Ad 2). Whether he will ever be accepted as a leader, depends on a number of factors. How do we think that villagers in Belgium, England or Holland would react on a young man, come with the instruction: „Go to village X and try to be accepted as a leader”? And then, what type of leader is meant, the democratic or the authoritarian one?

In many (parts of) underdeveloped countries still exist feudal conditions. Other regions only recognize the tribal leader. In many villages nothing can be achieved without the consent of the official leader. To tell the c.d. worker that he must be accepted and therefore pose as a leader, may only lead to an open conflict with the already present and officially recognized leader, who tolerates no violations upon his alleged rights and position.

In Ethiopia the c.d. workers always were advised to win the confidence of the official leader, rather then to try to pose as a leader himself. In a strict hierarchically minded society it is preferable for a c.d. agent to go and visit first of all the village leader with a letter of introduction from the higher authorities. The agent might try to get an invitation and stay in the chief's home for some time to explain him his arrival and instructions. In that way he may win the confidence of the leader, who is very sensitive to a recognition. The c.d. worker then may act through the leader instead of next to the leader.

One thing however is clear: a too young and therefore immature c.d. agent will never be accepted as a leader.

Ad 3) „He must promote the community spirit”. This also is easily said, but difficult to be done. A real community spirit is often lacking as in the more developed western countries, where it is equally difficult to find a village or small town that is not divided into two or more camps, when an important (public) issue is at stake! Problems like schools, parks, playgrounds for children and even statues
have to be overcome by the democratic method: the majority wins. Democracy however has not yet reached many a village in most African countries that are still slumbering in the feudal middle ages. There an individual approach often is a more direct way to success than an appeal to a not present community spirit.

Ad 4) „He must promote the self-help of the people”. This is quite true, but only in a number of cases. The point is: how far can we go in asking the people to help themselves? It is a fact, that over and over again the c.d. workers get the stereotyped answer of the villager: „this we cannot do ourselves, such is the task of the government”. The c.d. agent has been trained not to accept this answer.

In the western countries however there are quite a number of things that are taken care of by the government. I just mention a few: public works like roads, bridges, dams, pavement; public health, clinics, hospitals, control of communicable diseases, water supply, electricity; disposal of kitchen refuse, etc. And what happens for instance, when through a strike in the ranks of the public services the disposal of kitchen refuse is no longer taken care of? People throw their dirt on the streets and block the pavements and roads with it. See only the latest riots in Belgium as late as January 1961! Is this showing a community spirit and a readiness to help oneself? Why is it then so remarkable, that people in the underdeveloped areas, who also pay their taxes but often do get nothing in return (because the money goes mainly to the big cities) always point to the duties of the government?

The only solution here is, that we leave it to the sensible insight of the c.d. agent on the spot to declare, what people really can do themselves and what should be left to the government to take care of. If he has been trained to hammer always on people’s conscience and (often not existing) feelings of duty, he is apt to harness people against himself, with the result that nothing ever happens.

Ad 5). „He must advise and guide the people in a number of tasks”. Here again I rather leave it to the c.d. worker to decide, what tasks are to be undertaken.

If he has been properly trained, he does not need detailed instructions.

If he looks too often at them and compares what improvements in reality he has so far performed, he is apt to be disappointed and frustrated pretty soon. Especially so, when he reads reports about c.d. successes in other countries. There always seem to be successes in other countries than his own.

Here I want to raise a strong objection against all those „front window dressing” reports that I have seen so often; while later on I heard of the real truth. Many U.N. experts are guilty of these exaggerations, of shinning up results and revealing in their reports only one half of the truth. „In the area of X the c.d. agent finally succeeded to install a pump with the active co-operation of the villagers. In the future the villagers are sure of a clear drinking-water-supply. ”Not is mentioned the „active co-operation of the villagers” (often only one-tenth of the villagers) has been forced by the village leader; neither does the next report reveal us that „the pump has been broken within 3 days after installment; it has been repaired, but was broken again within 10 days. Lack of spare parts — and lack of co-operation on the side of the so seemingly eager villagers — has compelled us to abandon this project”.
Another example: „The ardent c.d. agent in the area Y has started a day-school for children and night classes for adults. At the opening ceremony the school was teeming with eager students”. Not however will be reported that next month almost all of the eager students have given up these classes and this for a number of reasons: to help father with his farmwork, to herd the cattle or because — in the case of night classes — they were not willing to pay for the kerosine of the petromaxes that provided the light in the class; or, as in many cases: out of sheer dis-interest. Such brushed-up reports are, alas, too often to be found. They have started the myth, that community development is the only solution for the manifold problems that are facing the underdeveloped countries.

Naturally there are quite a number of exceptions; in some countries the c.d. workers do score a number of real successes. One finds them in those countries only, where the government takes an active interest in the subject matter of c.d. and does not hesitate to back up promising projects with funds, personnel and materials. And I think it would also be worthwhile to find out, if the best successes are not scored in the more advanced areas of a country instead of in the most backward and underdeveloped parts of the same country.

Ad 6) „He must change the attitude of the people”.

I think, that this is the most important item of the whole list, from which all other functions of the c.d. worker can be deduced. It seems the best collective term possible. He has to start an initial survey; he has to get the confidence of the people, he must promote people’s active co-operation; all this he has to do in order to change the attitude of the people or he can do because he has already changed it. How he must change people’s attitudes and beliefs is quite another thing; it is up to psychology and sociology to provide the answers — I cannot go into further details here.

From this function the twofold role of the c.d. agent can be derived:
1) some problems he can try to tackle himself
2) some (bigger) tasks he must leave to the experts.

First of all, the agent „has to make an initial survey” and has to „study specific sectors or problems, designed to discover, on the one hand, what the people do, know and think about the problem and, on the other hand, what the technicians have in mind”. For, without this study beforehand, the agent will never be able to change people’s attitude. He has to know first, what that attitude is.

The initial survey serves two purposes: a) for the c.d. worker himself to get a clear picture of the area and b) in order to be able to write a detailed report of his findings to the government. The government can now decide what shortcomings there are in what fields and how these should be tackled; and also where additional governmental help is needed for projects that seemingly go beyond the power of the c.d. agent. It can also list the priority of the project.

It is not easy to draw the line between projects that can be undertaken by the communities themselves (which means by the c.d. worker) and the projects where additional governmental help is needed. It is easier to describe, what tasks the c.d. agent should not do. We must never forget, that this man is alone in the field, practically without materials and any other assistance. But also one must bear in mind that he is in the field and knows the real
problems of the area, so that we can leave it safely to him to make some kind of a distinction.

The real task of the c.d. worker then becomes: to prepare the road for future progress — either undertaken by himself, either by the experts and technicians.

Very often agricultural extension agents, medical teams, malaria control teams and the like, do not know, when arriving in certain areas, the difficulties that face them in the form of certain prejudices, superstitions, beliefs and disbeliefs, and they are not familiar with the peculiarities of the different official leaders in the area. In this way, they often lose valuable time before they can start operations; sometimes even they are never able to finish their job. But now there is a c.d. agent present who has prepared the ground, who knows the area, the formal and informal leaders, the peculiarities, customs, superstitions and beliefs of the people. It is a tremendous advantage to have such a man on the spot, to guide the technical experts in the human side of the problem. When the c.d. agent has not been led to the belief that he is a „Mr. Know-all”, but knows his shortcomings instead, the c.d. agent is the most valuable assistant for the team of experts; and the danger of friction and professional jealousy can be avoided.

Again, it is difficult to draw the line, what the c.d. worker should or should not do himself in order to avoid failure, disappointment and friction. Meanwhile it should be recognized, that some successes are necessary to stimulate his and the people’s interest and enthusiasm; to give them the satisfaction that something really can be done by themselves and also to give the people faith in the c.d. worker. Besides, there is the economical point of view.

To conclude, some examples can be given of what a c.d. worker — in my opinion — should not do. Starting day-classes for children and night-classes for adults. For three reasons such is not advisable: 1) it takes too much time. The c.d. workers in Ethiopia at one time were all being used as „common” teachers (no degradation meant). It usurped all of their time and soon any initiative to start other projects and to study the people, their customs, traditions and idiosyncrasies had been killed. 2) This is the task of the teacher. The danger is very real, that otherwise the c.d. worker and schoolteacher soon will clash and instead of becoming co-operators, they become competitors. 3) If c.d. really starts in the less underdeveloped areas of the country, there is no need to perform this task. Schools are already present since a long time; this is necessary — as has been pointed out earlier — because the elementary schools provide the basic knowledge on which to build further progress. For the still illiterates in the area (migrants and the like) night-classes can be started by the „common” teacher, who must be additionally paid.

Should the c.d. worker take care of first aid in the village (this covers much more than what is understood in western countries by the term „first aid”) and act as controller of communicable diseases? I would like to answer: is this virtually possible? Is not such a task already often too big for even a fully equipped and staffed hospital?

Summing up the role and functions of the c.d. worker at village level: To change people’s attitude in order to prepare the road for future progress and actions a) undertaken by himself b) undertaken with the help of the government that sends experts into the areas, where additional help is needed (constructors, ci-
vil engineers, agricultural extension agents, medical teams, malaria control teams, etc.). The c.d. worker sends the reports, on which the government bases its action.

In this way one can speak of an active cooperation between the government and the c.d. agent in the field who gets the feeling that he is really being backed by his government; between c.d. worker and the experts that get the advice on the human side of the problem; and between people, government and c.d. worker, who acts as an intermediate between people and authorities and guides the villagers on their road towards progress.

Now we have come to the last point: Ad 7) „He must find the local (formal and informal) leaders to take over his job when he leaves the area for another assignment”.

One warning beforehand: one must not expect the c.d. worker to leave that area so soon; therefore the problems he is facing are too big and too manifold!

We have mentioned the local and official (ly recognized) leader in many places before. We also have stated some demands made upon the person and the work of the c.d. agent:

„the community development worker must be mature enough to command respect”, „he must win the confidence of the people” (I added: „and of the leader in the first place”), „must be accepted as a leader” (upon which I commented on the danger of this concept in many countries), „must make an initial survey of the area”, „must study the customs, traditions and idiosyncrasies of the people and „the way they look at, think of and handle their problems”, „must recognize the felt and unfelt needs of the people” (this point is, so to speak, almost identical with their problems); and finally: „he must spot the leader to train him, so that he can take over his job after his departure from the area”.

When we look at the list, one suggestion that can solve many c.d. problems, presses itself more or less automatically forward: the idea of the leader as the perfect c.d. worker himself. Why not? It seems only too logical and it has — to follow the list — the advantages stated hereafter; provided he is the real and accepted leader. Then he is also:

mature enough to command respect; has the confidence of the people; is already accepted as the leader; can make an initial survey (after some good training), almost by heart knows the customs, traditions and idiosyncrasies of the people already and knows — again, after a good training — and understands their problems in the form of their felt and unfelt needs; he stays in the area and does not need to hand over his job to the leader being the leader himself; he can promote village councils and the like much easier; he participates fully in village life and has his own interest in village matters (be it only through the fact that he has an interest in his own material affairs); he has already established contact with higher authorities and officials and finally he saves the additional money for a c.d. agent according to the old concept.

Even more advantages are thinkable, but this list will do for the moment. I am sure, objections to this point of view can be raised. But if it sounds logical, why not give it a trial to find suitable local leaders with enough educational background, with enough human interest and enough zeal for the progress of his country? And being willing to leave their duty-station for a training period in the c.d. centers? Ex-
experiments can show, what subjects they ought to be trained in and for how long a time they should be instructed there.

Probably there are not many such leaders to be found; but some must be present, both at the lower and the higher level, so that the supervisionary problem of this type of c.d. worker can be dealt with adequately at sub-district-, district- and provincial level.

f). One more point to conclude this article. It concerns the attitude of the c.d. worker towards the people as well as vice-versa. It bears also close relation to the suggestion of the leader as the real community development agent.

In many cases, one can talk of a very wrong attitude of the c.d. student and the c.d. agent towards the people he is going to help: disdain and contempt for „the primitive, uneducated villagers”, to use their own words. This attitude often is not an exception, but a rule, the belletristic literature is full of examples (see the recent novel „The raindoctor” by Peter Wingate). He feels himself very superior and is full of overestimation. Partly this is due to a wrong training (see especially the contestable terms „Mr. Know-all” and „simple skills” mentioned before), partly this is inherent to any situation where the one-eye is king. It is still beyond many c.d. worker’s comprehension, that he is being sent to „primitive, illiterate and uneducated” persons indeed, because, if these people were not uneducated and ignorant, they would not need his help.

The attitude of the people towards this man is in accordance with his own conduct and behaviour: people describe him and use terms as: „He is a snotty nose (the danger of too young a c.d. agent!),

he is immoral, has lost faith in the traditions and beliefs of his fathers, does not go to church, does not fast, is wearing European clothes, commits the sin of smoking cigarettes”; in short: „He does not belong to us, he comes from the big city, that pool of iniquity”. This is the well-known conception of village people, deeply rooted in the old contrast between city and village, between rural and urban life.

I think, that the suggestion of the official local leader as the true c.d. agent can do a lot to improve this wrong attitude at both sides.

g) Finally I should like to suggest to come to a national c.d. bulletin or newspaper for every country, which bulletin must be partly filled with experiences, related by the fieldworkers themselves (in the broad sense of all technical assistance personnel). It has the following advantages: instruction for everyone, including authorities even at department level; through the experience of his fellow-colleagues and former classmates the c.d. worker hears of successes scored elsewhere in the country and can study the methods, used in forwarding the solution to a certain problem; it forms a bond between all persons dealing with technical assistance.

From here it is only one step to an international technical assistance (or specialised community development) magazine, that gives information of the technical assistance and community development programs, carried out all over the world. The present issues don’t meet the demands. Such an international, illustrated and well-informed magazine has the same advantages of instruction, study-material and link between all field personnel, regardless of race and nationality.