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Foreign Visitors' Seminars

Under the Fulbright program, a number of foreign scholars come to the United States each year to conduct research or to lecture in our colleges and universities. These visits make it possible for American and foreign scholars to learn directly of one another's work and ways of life.

However, the American experience of our visitors often is quite narrow, because of the limitations of funds, time, and language. Our educational scene is somewhat bewildering and incomprehensible to a scholar who is accustomed to the more cloistered life and aloofness of some foreign faculties. To insure a broader experience for our Fulbright visitors, the Committee on International Exchange of Persons of the Conference Board of Associated Research Councils has arranged annually, for the last 3 years, two seminars in which visiting and American scholars can meet to discuss higher education. These seminars are made possible by the generosity and vision of The Edward W. Hazen Foundation.

These seminars are of 3 or 4 days' duration as a rule and have been held in June at some institution where appropriate living accommodations are available. About 60 persons, of which 15 to 20 are Americans, have been assembled for a typical seminar. Several days of uninterrupted discussions on the aims, objectives, methods, and philosophy of our system as seen against their own have been of great advantage to them, and they in turn have contributed equally by their frank and shrewd appraisals in the reverse perspective.

There are other important, if less tangible, gains to such a meeting. The seminars give scholars the opportunity for discussions that go beyond the usual pleasantries. Of course, much of this deeper communication comes about in the normal course of a visitor's stay, but the ordinary relationship between scholars lacks the dramatic effect and the lasting impact achieved when visitors and hosts meet for 2 or 3 days of well-planned discussion in congenial surroundings. The visiting scholar's sense of his usefulness as a cultural ambassador is heightened when his American colleagues become sufficiently interested in his presence in this country to invite him to talks about education and scholarship. The Americans participating in the seminars are no less gratified to find that their own ideas are sharpened and their horizons expanded by the comments and friendly criticism of their guests from abroad.

Fortunately this program is being continued. The problem is that Fulbright scholars are not our only visitors. A substantial number of foreign specialists in medicine, engineering, and other scientific disciplines, as well as foreign students of the humanities, are now in the United States under other auspices. Comparable programs should be developed for these scholars, so that they, too, can benefit from the special contact such programs make possible. Tentative steps have been taken in this direction but are limited to a few disciplines. This kind of program should be of sufficient benefit in itself to warrant sponsorship by various professional societies. It is to be hoped that interest may spread and grow.

It has been aptly said that "communication is the life-blood of science." It is no less the life-blood of international friendship and understanding. It is important to make this communication as direct and as personal as possible by giving scholars from many countries fuller opportunities to meet together. The seminars that have already been held amply demonstrate the possibility of achieving these important "multiplier" effects.—M. H. TRYTTEN, *Office of Scientific Personnel, National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council*.