

A LOOK BACKWARD

If our tomorrows are what our todays make them, perhaps it is a good idea to take a quick look backward on the yesterdays that made the AAFSW what it is today.

Twelve or thirteen years ago, the development of the AAFSW was considered revolutionary by many members of the foreign service, both men and women, and certainly by members of the State Dept. The idea of training wives for their role overseas, of a Desk to assist incoming personnel and even of lending more than a sympathetic ear to the opinions of a wife was alien. Prior to the Second World War, when the Service was smaller, wives met for informal luncheons, discussed the rules of protocol, when to wear gloves and how to achieve a balanced seating arrangement at formal dinners. After the War, the service was larger, more wives had been employed and there was a need for more specific information and direction than could be achieved over creamed chicken.

In the winter of 1959 June Byrne, Polly Jones, Pat Armitage, Ann Penfield, Nene Dorman, Peggy Morgan, Jane Hart, Marjorie Gallman, Ruth Thompson and a number of others met regularly to outline plans for an organization of FS wives, draw up a constitution, set up a tax status and start some of the activities that have now become so much a part of AAFSW. The FS Desk began answering local needs of incoming families, The Calendar, "Welcome to Washington" booklet and Book Fair began earning money for FS scholarships, the Wives informal training sessions grew into a proper course and one day, along with everything else, the carefully drawn up articles of incorporation were notarized in the back of a variety store and the AAFSW was born. Since then, regular monthly meetings have provided informative speakers, wives have been making hospital visits on ailing FS families, long talks through the Speakers' Bureau, sponsoring the annual Teen Ball and running an increasingly successful Book Fair which has provided scholarships for a large number of our children.

On Oct. 4, 1961 June Byrne, the first AAFSW President said in her second annual report, "This luncheon marks the beginning of the second year that FS women have been meeting as an organized group for the purpose of achieving collectively what we tried to do individually to make a contribution to the foreign service, our country, home and husband."

In reply, Sec. of State Rusk, first Sec. of State to ever address an organized group of FS wives, told the 400 women that the contribution women and wives make to the FS is a great service not only to the Dept. of State and the overseas Post but it permits the Department to operate with greater subtlety, understanding and intelligence than would otherwise be possible. He said: It is increasingly apparent that the AAFSW emerged at a time when it was needed and it can become a strong and constructive force in the service. Foreign Service women have a unique opportunity to help bring greater understanding between Americans and women everywhere in the world. More than ever before we are aware that individually and collectively wives have responsibilities to assume and contributions to make far beyond the present efforts. It is through the Association that we can consolidate and direct our efforts and thereby become more effective and useful members of the foreign service.

All of that was over ten years ago—that yesterday, is now today, but what of tomorrow?

IN THE THINK TANK

PROPOSED FOREIGN SERVICE EDUCATIONAL CENTER

The 1972 AAFSW Board voted a contribution of \$8,000 toward the establishment of a Foreign Service Educational Center, on the basis of recognized need for additional facilities for treatment of dependents. Such a center would be an educational/family "service-base" in the U.S. for consultation and planning with children and parents, to assess progress and offer remedial facilities, as proposed by Clark W. Slade, F.S. Consultant in Education and Youth Concerns.

The disruptions a Foreign Service child encounters in frequent changes of schools and environments range from mildly inconvenient to severely traumatic, from exhilarating to depressing. No central counseling center exists to which, regardless of post assignment, parents and children world-wide can turn for continuity of concern, support, assessment and planning. The proposed Foreign Service Educational Center would provide such direct services to clients as testing by the professional staff of an existing agency which is prepared to consider services on a contract basis, tutoring for the development or remediation of skills (language, mathematics, etc.), tutoring in subject fields (history, literature, etc.), psychiatric evaluation, educational counseling, group process therapy, orientation for U.S. schooling, and coordination of services with schools and colleges with State Dept. A/OS and O/MED.

There now exist resources for payment of fees beyond private means when there is medical need for treatment, but in fact there are no funds for educational assessment of children to keep their education running smoothly and forestall problems in the face of the father's frequent transfers. For this purpose an increased grant from AAFSW is part of the proposal being considered by the AAFSW Board at present. It is assumed that the proposed Foreign Service Educational Center would be self-supporting. In its initial stages, original administrative and promotional expenses would be paid from the AAFSW grant. Since the purpose of the Foreign Service Educational Center would be to provide widely needed services, the tapping of sources of third-party payment of fees would encourage clients to use the services without full cost to themselves. Some limited sources now exist. Costs of "psychological testing" prescribed by an M.D. are 80% reimbursable, after deductible, under all three insurance plans used by F.S. officers. Similarly, fees for counseling by a psychiatric social worker under a psychiatrist's supervision are 80% reimbursable after deductible under two of the three plans. Referrals by DG/MED would be paid for by Dept. or insurance funds.

Such a center would improve learning progress of Foreign Service children below college-age, strengthening, thereby, family life in the Foreign Service as a community with unique conditions. The Board would welcome your thoughts on this proposal!

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