How the Society Can Help Individual Advisors and Country Workers

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Highlight

This paper suggests that the American Society of Range Management maintains services to visiting trainees to USA and to technicians on overseas assignments; and in other ways help gain needed attention and work on ranges worldwide.

Range Management advisors are going to other countries in ever increasing numbers. As a technician in Argentina I felt the need of help many times. Some of the answers I needed could have been provided by an organization like the American Society of Range Management. ASRM has a tremendous opportunity to advance the cause of range management worldwide, through aid in selecting, and by assisting technicians involved in overseas range management problems. There are several possible approaches to how our society can help make our overseas programs more effective. They might be categorized as follows:

1. To assist various agencies in selection of technicians best qualified for the purposes of a particular program in a certain country.

2. To help technicians become well oriented to the task ahead before they visit another country.

3. To help technicians while they are working in another country.

4. To assist in making visits of foreign ranchers and technicians to our country more meaningful.

To accomplish this type of assistance, I would like to discuss some ideas which have been given me by many of our members who have had experience as range technicians in other countries. We should evaluate these ideas and determine which ones are feasible for our organization. Then without further delay I believe we should make this type of program one of the primary objectives of the American Society of Range Management. A strong vigorous program of this nature could be one of the finest contributions our organization could make.

1. The Society could maintain a list of people who are interested and qualified for overseas assignments. This list can be shared with hiring agencies such as AID, FAO and others, and active assistance given in procuring the best qualified men for the various positions. The Society might serve effectively as a clearing house for information about other range-trained individuals who may be available to serve in overseas jobs. The selection of individuals who are going to take overseas assignments in range management is extremely important. They should be trained and oriented in range management but equally important should be interested and concerned about the people they are going to help and, if necessary, be able to handle or learn the language.

2. We could maintain a range management contact in Washington, D. C. both as a service to hiring and training agencies and for point of contact or clearing house for overseas technicians to contact for any service the Society might offer him.

3. The Society should compile and maintain an up-to-date list of men who have been or are currently abroad on foreign assignments in range management. The list could be a brief record of the men and their assignments including perhaps:

- Name of country.
- Name of worker and address.
- Educational background.
- Experience previous to foreign assignment.
- Nature of foreign assignment.
- Length of assignment.
- Bibliography of publications or reports on assignment.

When a new man goes on a foreign assignment, he could request through ASRM, the names of the men, plus pertinent data on them, who have been to that country.

4. The Society could compile a list of foreign nationals who have been on training programs in this country, classified by country of origin and nature of training programs they participate in while here. It would give a new man an opportunity to find contacts in the country to which he was assigned.

5. The Society should urge the addition of a range man or men to the staff of agencies hiring overseas technicians who could aid these agencies in the selection of qualified men. These men should act as backstops for
their men overseas and get various types of vital information for them such as sources of seed, names of nearby technicians, identification of plants, references, etc. There are some range men on the staff of these organizations, such as Milo Cox, but they are burdened with other important duties.

6. The Society should maintain a good bibliography of range management literature published about other countries and make this list available to people needing it for overseas assignments.

7. We should carry more international material in the Journal, not only technical articles but also news and notes about activities in other countries. The Society should encourage more foreign nationals to prepare suitable articles. This should be particularly instrumental in bringing about a better understanding of the variety of range problems existing in the different parts of the world. It has been suggested that in order to better fulfill this objective a fairly standard pattern could be evolved for authors to follow to insure that comparative information would become available. For example, there should be a description of the environment, including certain social aspects, a definition of the basic problems, and some suggestions for solutions being tried or solutions that might be feasible. Eventually it might be possible to publish these in the form of a pamphlet or book.

The maintenance of good accounts of overseas workers in the news and notes section of the Journal would not only help to stimulate interest but also provide good contacts for people planning overseas work.

8. The Society should supply information about our organization. Any worker going to a foreign country where there is natural grassland should at least know of all the Society publications; the Journal, the Range Glossary, our book on Range Problems and Research Techniques, the Spanish summaries, the annual meeting abstracts, the regional or state handbooks for youth, and the section newsletters. This is quite a list and perhaps not all could be carried but a worker could at least carry samples of all of them. The Society should compile a list and make the material available to USAID, FAO and other professionals who go to work in range countries.

9. We should find a way to help impress our administrators of foreign-aid programs and administrators in other countries of the importance of the range resource and the complexities involved in dealing with it. Many people have related that many officials they have encountered in overseas assignments have very little understanding or appreciation of the range as a natural resource. Most have agronomy or veterinary training and are primarily concerned with improved pastures or some livestock problem. Some feel range values too low to justify attention even though 90% of the country may be range, with range livestock the main business. I think, too, that our Society could help in trying to convince certain hiring agencies that it is impossible to visit a country and come up with all the solutions in two months or two years without some knowledge of the vegetation. Some research is going to be necessary in order to get answers. Very few people can fly out of Kansas or Texas to some country in Africa or South America and prescribe immediate solutions. Many times the best we can do is suggest ways of finding the solutions.

10. The cost of membership in our Society for people in important range countries should be adjusted according to the abilities of the people in that country to pay. This is one of the few ways we have of maintaining an influence in a country after the technician has left. Our Society has worked with this problem for some time. The Board authorized a $6 membership for underdeveloped country personnel but this is high for many countries. We should keep trying, for the benefit of those who have only pesos, bolivars, sols, cruzeiros, etc., and find it difficult to get dollars. Perhaps one of the foundations, such as Rockefeller, with activity in most Latin American and some African countries, would be willing to act as our agent, accepting local currency for subscriptions, and paying us in dollars.

11. The Society might assist in developing training courses for updating foreign service technicians on home leave. Many technicians spend several years in other countries and need to be informed on the latest findings in our country. The Society could be useful in promoting short courses at, or visits to, Universities and Experiment Stations.

12. The Society should encourage (working through AID, FAO, etc.) the contracting country to establish a "grass roots" extension position with each of our range management missions. He would be valuable in helping the consultant reach his own people more effectively. This man would be native of the country visited and would be a person of recognized scientific stature, if possible. He would help the visitor reach the people more effectively.

13. Hiring agencies could publish a list of open positions in the Journal. Many capable and interested people might respond who might otherwise never be contacted.
14. We should help foreign visitors, interested in range, plan their itinerary in this country. A great difference exists in the attitude of range technicians in this country regarding the time and effort they are willing to spend showing foreign visitors the work being accomplished here. The Society could determine areas and technicians where foreign visitors are well received and shown interesting and informative things. Often there is too much time spent in short office visits in the cities where our technicians are headquartered and not enough time out on the ground with the visitors. I would like to illustrate the importance of these visits with a personal experience. I spent some time in LaPampa Province in Argentina in 1961. I was supposed to analyze their problems and suggest some solutions. Some of my recommendations dealt with demonstrations of good management practices. We sought a few respected and influential ranchers to conduct some of these demonstrations, knowing that if they found any of our suggestions worthwhile the neighboring ranchers would adopt them. One such rancher was Roberto Souto. Between my first and second visits Mr. Souto and eight of his friends came to this country, at their own expense, to see some of our practices. They spent ten days with us at Hays touring our studies but mostly visiting ranches in our area. When I returned to Argentina, Mr. Souto told me that their visit to the States was a very valuable experience. He said, rather apologetically, that my visit to his country was fine and that they got some ideas from me that turned out okay but it was hard for him to accept some of them until he saw them in operation on ranches in the States. So, I think their visits are very important and our Society can help in planning a good itinerary for them.

I have listed a number of possible ways our Society could be helpful to our effort in range management overseas. Most of the ideas came from many of our members with experience overseas. There are too many suggestions on the list for our Society to implement at once. We should push forward vigorously on the ones already underway. Then we could select the other more urgent ones and get started on them. Some might be hard to implement but others are quite possible for us to accomplish. Most of our activities are carried on by volunteers and all of us are busy so that many features of the program stay mostly in the talking stage. It might be possible for the Society to cooperate with some agency or foundation in setting up a position for one or more of our members to administer some of these suggestions.

Perhaps our major contribution could be in helping to get the very best qualified people into overseas assignments. Individuals vary greatly in their temperament or personality when it comes to dealing with technicians of another country, perhaps of a different race and brought up in an entirely different atmosphere. Some people adapt well to cultural situations they find while others remain aloof to the cultural benefits available and segregate themselves with other Americans located there. This segregating arrangement certainly limits their effectiveness. We need to have people who will get out in the country with the people, on the land, if they are going to be effective. This is as true in foreign countries as it is in the United States. Probably the most important characteristic of a technician is a willingness to look and listen before trying to offer advice in a foreign country.

I haven't proposed a good strong mechanism for our Society to use in carrying on some of these proposals. However, I feel sure we can come up with the mechanism to handle essential parts of the program. The committee for International Affairs chaired by Dr. Hedrick made a report similar to this one several years ago. It should have been given whole-hearted support of the Board and the Society as a whole. The ASRM International Relations Committee, under Chairman W. R. Chapline, has pursued a vigorous program within the limits of volunteer workers and limited finances. Let's move aggressively forward because as one of our past presidents said in his letter to me "The stakes in foreign assignments are sufficiently high to warrant our special efforts."