

INTRODUCTION

An overall assessment of the University of Richmond's Summer 1991 faculty seminar in the People's Republic of China is easily made: it provided an exceptional opportunity for twelve University colleagues to broaden their perspectives, to see new sights and to think new thoughts. The University is to be commended for its support of the program, and Dr. Gabara is to be complimented for organizing and overseeing the adventure.

On a more personal level my remarks may differ in structure and content from those of most other members of the group for two reasons: (1) I am not a member of the core course faculty committee which has had as its continuing focus the development of this special new University offering, and (2) I have previously visited the P.R.C. and, consequently, probably had more experience at first hand to know what to anticipate and upon which to evaluate what I saw and heard.

MAJOR STRENGTHS OF THE PROGRAM

Without doubt the sense of "being there" and "feeling" the very different environment which surrounded us was the greatest strength of the program. The history and culture of the Chinese people, as well as the current realities in the P.R.C., became quite real to us. Even the most excellent literature could not communicate the assault on one's senses that "being there" provides.

Second, meeting with our Chinese peers was a very important element of the program. Even though we represented different fields of academic specialization and levels of professional achievement, these sessions were most significant. Even if only to a limited degree we were able to sense what our lives would be like if we were Chinese faculty, rather than American.

Third, and closely related to the previous point, it was good that we saw people in other professions and occupations "at work." All tourists meet hotel desk clerks and restaurant waiters, but in addition we got at least minimal insight into the work patterns of physicians, school teachers, farmers and others.

Experiences identified in the both the second and third

points, above, were further reinforced by our several visits to universities, schools, hospitals, homes and other places which are part of the "domestic world" of the Chinese people. Such visits - at least, in such numbers - would not be so significant a part of a regular tour abroad.

Fifth, the pattern of visits to important historical and touristic sites was good: it did not overwhelm the itinerary, although clearly it was planned for us to see a great deal. Nearly every tourist visiting China will see the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, as we did. But how many have the opportunity to explore the cultural significance of Taishan and Qufu?

Sixth, I especially liked having the opportunity to "burrow in" at a few places, and to explore them in a more leisurely and more meaningful way. In fact, in retrospect I would have preferred visiting rather fewer places while staying longer at those visited.

Seventh, as a newcomer to this University's faculty the study group provided me with my first substantial opportunity to become well acquainted with colleagues from outside the School of Business. Some very special friendships were forged during the three-week period.

ELEMENTS WORTHY OF RECONSIDERATION

As previously stated, the study tour was a most successful and worthwhile program. Even so, I would suggest further consideration, or reconsideration, of a few elements.

First, it would be well to reduce the number of places visited, and to "burrow in" somewhat more in them. China is a vast country, and travel within China takes its toll in time and energy. The trade-off is a difficult one of "see as much as possible while there since it may be one's only visit to China" vs. "learn more by concentrating on fewer places." I prefer the latter.

Second, speaking as member of the School of Business faculty, I was surprised and disappointed that "economic policy and planning" was not the subject of one of our scheduled lectures. This is a particularly important omission, given the objective of the core course committee, and given the uniquely rigid posture of the Chinese government with regard to both domestic and

international economic issues.

Third, while all of the topics of the scheduled lectures were interesting and worthwhile, frequently I felt that the wrong person served as the lecturer. Obviously, the language barrier is a real obstacle in such situations. Even so, some command of English on the part of a staff member at an institution does not necessarily imply expertise of that person in Chinese law, medicine, or whatever.

Fourth, one might hope for visiting a stronger roster of institutions of higher learning. In several instances it would appear that the University of Richmond has little in common with institutions visited. I realize that prior personal contact with some of these schools was a factor in their selection, but such contact probably is not necessary to arrange visits to stronger institutions. A better "fit" of institutions would be helpful.

PROFESSIONAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY TOUR

I feel that my professional expertise as a teacher, a researcher, and as director of the University's International Business Studies program has been enhanced by my involvement in the study tour.

As a teacher I have had my field of experience broadened. I have new attitudes, experiences and examples to share with my students, and I will do so.

As a researcher I am tempted to extend my current investigation of international topics such as gray marketing, counter-trading, and joint ventures with communist economies to include the P.R.C. The coming takeover of Hong Kong and Macau in 1997 raises additional research topics.

Perhaps the most visible benefit which may come from the study tour is establishment of some form of program to assist other University of Richmond Business (and other) faculty in visiting China - whether for research or teaching - focusing on the special economic zone in the southern portion of the province of Guangdong. As Director of the International Business Studies effort I could use my experience and insights from China to support visits

by other Business School colleagues if such an opportunity materializes. This possibility was discussed while we were in Guangzhou, and I look forward to its further consideration.