

Red Tape Stifles Vietnam Medicos

Chestnut Hill, Mass.—Americans haven't practiced preventive medicine, preventive economics, or preventive bureaucracy in Vietnam, the chief advisor to the Vietnamese Public Health Officer in Saigon told a Boston College student audience.

Dr. Thomas S. Durant, who returned from 17 months in Saigon as the U.S. Agency for International Development's civilian public health advisor, said lack of rational priorities and American and Vietnamese bureaucratic red tape are the most stifling things in Saigon today.

Speaking on "You Can't Beat City Hall—Even in Saigon," Dr. Durant told the students at the Jesuit university that "in a country that has had a cholera epidemic every year since 1964 there is only a cholera ward in the one communicable disease hospital in Saigon, and this cholera treatment center has a cesspool which drains into the river which provides the water supply for the citizens." Dr. Durant said he has been fighting red tape for 14 months to get a contract for an improved sewage disposal system at the center and it hasn't come through yet.

"Right now the cholera ward is actually taking the disease and spreading it to the entire city," he said.

Saigon is a "schizophrenic Shangri-La," Dr. Durant said. "The largest hospital in Saigon has hedges beautifully sculptured in the shape of dragons, but it hasn't had running water for the past year. This same hospital also has a spacious manicured children's play yard. But inside the hospital two or three children are dumped into one bed."

Citing the need for an improved program of preventive medicine, Dr. Durant said, "There are 2½ million Vietnamese with tuberculosis and 100,000 lepers — and 40 percent of the children die before the age of two years. This can all be prevented. Yet the new \$2½ million medical school in Saigon is teaching 21st century concepts while living in the 20th century and the people outside the hospital are dying of 18th century diseases."

He called for more treatment centers and more relevant

training of Vietnamese medical personnel as well as having the Vietnamese military hospitals do more in treating their own civilians.

A graduate of Boston College and Georgetown Medical School, Dr. Durant gave up a private practice in obstetrics and gynecology in Boston to accept the 21-month tour of duty in Saigon for AID because "I had a government job twenty years ago — as an acting private in Korea, and I thought I should return to the scene of the crime." He will return to Saigon this week after a trip to Washington "to raise some hell and try to cut some red tape."

Dr. Durant also indicted the priorities of economic advisors on Vietnam. He described economists as "the most powerful people in the world. But their world has a diameter of 17 inches—from their 'in' boxes to their 'out' boxes."

"For example, economists don't consider motivational factors," he asserted. "We tell them that lower death rates will lower birth rates in an agricultural society and they tell us we're crazy. They tell us to give everyone the pill to lower birth rates and these people still have the same number of children. Why? Because if a farmer knows that two of his children will die before the age of two, another will be wiped out by cholera, and another killed in the war, you better believe he's going to have a big family as his social security that he will have sons to work his farm in his old age."

"There is a lot of American myth-making about the Vietnamese because it is easier to speak about the 'inscrutable Oriental' than to make an effort to understand the Vietnamese individuals," Dr. Durant contends.

"For example, you have the myth of ancestral worship," he said. "Yet a group of refugees in my area built home on top of a cemetery and took the caskets out of the mausoleums and used them as bunk beds. That's a lot more adaptable and flexible than most Americans would be at this stage of the game."

There are certain universal similarities motivated by pride, love and love of family, he said.

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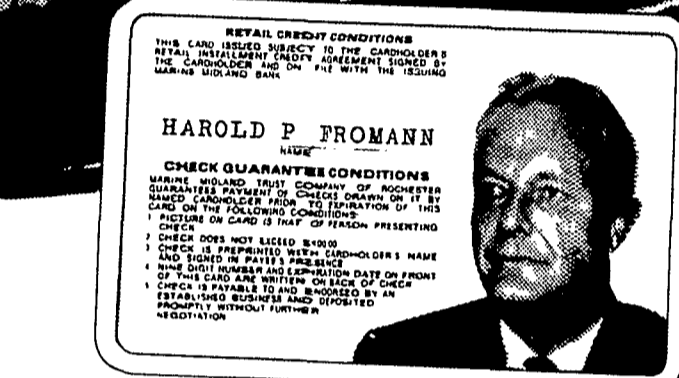
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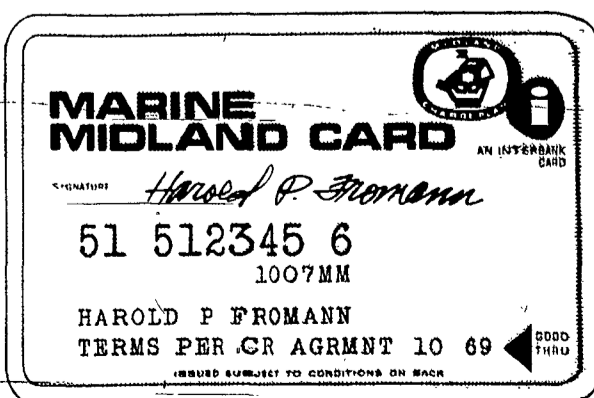
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CYO Starts Gym Program For Inner-City Parishes

A physical education program for the children of three inner-city neighborhoods was launched recently by the Catholic Youth Organization, with Paul George in charge.

C.Y.O. instructors are conducting the program in Immaculate Conception, Mt. Carmel and St. Bridget's parishes. The facilities of Lewis St. Settlement are used for the Mt. Carmel area, and something similar is sought for St. Bridget's, where school space is inadequate.

During the past two years, George has organized several educational and recreational programs for inner-city children. In his spare time he has conducted religion classes, with supervised study periods, and coached basketball and baseball teams.

C.Y.O. inner-city projects include a job placement program now in its fourth year, that provides paid, supervised work experience for boys and girls aged 14 to 16 years.

This past summer, C.Y.O. people staffed a day camp for 350 children and a playground, used by 650 youngsters from the Manhattan-George St. area.

Volunteer help in such undertakings would be welcome, the C.Y.O. office stated this week. Persons interested were asked to call 454-2030.



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BIG STEP

St. Joseph's Horseheads tor of Nurs

Elmira—Uniforms were held Hospital School of on Wednesday, De

Members of the

assembled in St. tory in uniform time for the bles sentation of the was followed by a conducted by the lain, Father Cyril The theme of th



FAREWELL

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The tea will be Board of Direc Angeles and the Guild A gay Cl will bedeck the cares for girls according to the reception.

Mother Immacation is a familiar community and l due to her activ

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Bishop Sheen, relationship of S the new center, things we shar there will be u