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SOUTH INDIA

Dear and Respected Sir (Editor)  
29-4-97

My love and prayers to you.

I am working as a lecturer in Social Work, teaching Community Development, interested in Yoga, professionally interested in participatory development, natural resource management, strengthening of self-help groups.

It was nice to read your letter\* and 'Reflections' that too accidentally (*came*) in our college office. I have to frankly admit that I came to understand about Katherine A. Kendall for the first time that too from Reflections. Thank you for that.

Since the interview is about international practice, with all due respect for her contribution, I have few comments to make. Throughout the interview I found that there is a tendency to project the history of the organizations and the efforts of the persons who handled the organizations are equated with the history of the professions. If the organizations would have proceeded in the right direction, need would have not arisen as lamented by Katherine A. Kendall (Reflection/boxed item/page 78). International practice is not something to evolve universal standards. In the name of international practice, we have been either bulldozing certain things or promoting something else which is not relevant to the local culture.

USA and the European countries have their own specific problems. You have taken it as a challenge to solve it, and that is reflected in the voluminous literature produced in the form of journals and books (e.g. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*)... as it is mentioned in your letter. It is O.K. as far as yourself is concerned. What I am worried is about the adaptive strategies followed by the southerners (lowers) and the northerners (uppers).

Southerners (lowers; we) feel that the passport to international practice is to get a degree from a Northern University or spending some time there. If we want to reach you, naturally we have to speak your language... that means we have to please you by showing interest in the subjects/activities promoted by you... even if it is not immediate concern for us. When we try to speak your language/when we adapt ourselves to your priorities, in the process we lose ourselves socially, but profiting personally... by getting sponsorship/study grants/visits etc.... and we too become international.

But for the Northerners international practice means not any soul searching, tiresome seeking in the fields of south; but rather occupying

prestigious positions in UN organizations or bilateral funding organizations. Though these out fits you just promote things which at many times (are) simply irrelevant for us.

I may be wrong but I feel that internationalism in the field of social work is characterized by deception and deceit (by us; southerners) and intellectual arrogance (by you northerners).

Your letter implicitly suggests that CSU have some sabbaticals for social workers to become internationalist. Those who want to become an internationalist in the conventional sense may write to you asking more details. But I have some thing to offer to you to promote true international practice.

Here apart from my regular full time teaching in the school of social work, I am also serving as a chair in one of the NGO (SPEECH)\*\* which is promoting participatory development, sustainable agriculture, natural resource management prevention of child labor, promotion of micro enterprises and women empowerment. Much of our work is centered around community organization practice.\*

If any one in CSU is willing to do sabbaticals in India, I can really support them with very decent accommodation, hygienic Indian food and travel within the service area at free of cost. The field area is located in one of the drought prone, backward district of Tamil Nadu, India.

On behalf of the NGO to which I am a chairman, we are happy to provide all possible help for an American Social Work Educator to become truly international.

This letter is written in good spirit... if you feel that there is an element of impoliteness, it is not my intention... it may be due to my limitation in vocabulary that too (is) in a foreign language.

I conclude this letter by submitting once again my respect and prename to you and your office.

Thanking you  
Sincerely yours  
S. Rengasamy

\*\* In reference to a letter sent by James Kelly (CSULB) to international schools of social work.

\*SPEECH has done some remarkable work in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) training; The founder-chairman Mr. John Devavaram is now working as a Senior Training Officer for FINNIDA supported by RIPS (Rural Integrated Programme Services) at Tanryania.

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