

The answers to these questions lie in the single word "sponsorship." The low-budget traveler must have access to organized programs, to various kinds of "package tours," within his financial means. Experiment programs, as an example in the nonprofit category, solve these problems in advance, at a price within range of moderately well-to-do foreign students. The visitor is thereby freed to devote all his energies to the business of seeing the United States, meeting its citizens, and getting to understand what the American way-of-life is all about.

Every student visitor should have the same advantages. He probably won't, however, unless steps are taken to subsidize private sponsoring organizations from a variety of public and private sources. The sobering fact is that The Experiment can program 2,800 students to the United States each year only by raising funds, arduously and continuously, in order to underwrite a portion of our incoming programs and thereby to offer them below cost. It is easy to understand our enthusiasm for the projected discounts on travel and accommodation rates, which will surely permit further reductions in our incoming program fees.

Sponsorship can also operate exclusively at the local level, providing facilitative services for international visitors once they have arrived in a community. The best example of locally-supported enterprises of this sort may be found within COSERV—the National Council for Community Services to International Visitors—comprising a national network of voluntary organizations in some 80 major communities. COSERV affiliates are supported entirely by local contributions, always from private sources, sometimes in part from municipal governments. Typical of the services provided are "language banks," through which a non-English-speaking visitor can be put in touch with a resident who speaks his language; lists of low-cost hotels, rooming houses, and other accommodations; lists of inexpensive restaurants and cafeterias; sightseeing and other useful guidebooks in many languages; social gatherings for Americans and foreign visitors; introductions to American families and to Americans who share similar professional interests; volunteers to serve as guides to points of interest; and counsel on what to do and how to get around within the community.

COSERV affiliates are particularly oriented to the needs of international visitors brought to the United States as guests of the United States Government and programmed under contract by various national agencies (including The Experiment in International Living). Many of these local units are ready and willing to offer their services to foreign visitors in other categories, but only for those who cannot afford a commercial tour or who have come not with the intention of just sightseeing, but of having a valid educational experience. In other words, COSERV offices, totally non-commercial in their own right, have no interest in competing with their commercial counterparts.

The availability and willingness of community volunteers are counterbalanced by a characteristic paucity of funds to run a professional operation. Even in a voluntary organization, there must be a full-time, professional staff committed to efficient performance; and there must be a centrally-located office with a modicum of furniture, equipment, and supplies. Volunteers must be recruited, trained, and supervised; correspondence and telephone calls must be answered; and information on community resources must be continually checked, updated, and made available to the inquiring visitor. But to underline the crucial point, voluntary offices such as those in the COSERV network are already operational, anxious to be of service to international visitors; and they represent another invaluable resource in our common effort to make American communities more agreeable, accommodating, and attractive places to visit.

Many of these service agencies do not need much, but that much they need badly. If they could be certain of a solid base of financial support, year in, year out, they could expand their volunteer forces and services to an extent which would substantially augment local capabilities to serve foreign visitors. Moreover, they are amenable to coordination by the National Office of COSERV in Washington, D.C. Why not make greater use of them in fighting the balance-of-payments problem?

Should the Federal Government lend a helping hand? Possibly, but not unequivocally. The educational-exchange field has always been in a class by itself, benefiting a little now and then from Federal Government largesse, but surviving by and large on its own merits. Educational exchange is supported by tens of thousands of Americans, yet has no coherent constituency. It is funded by private individuals, private enterprises, and local governments, yet serves national foreign policy goals. It lives day-to-day, hand-to-mouth, yet somehow