

We've failed in the Middle East by thinking too much of kings and Cadillacs, and not enough

Of Peasants and Water

DR. GEORGE L. CROSS, president of the University of Oklahoma, packed his bags a couple months ago and caught a plane to Washington, D. C. He was scheduled to attend a committee meeting on January 27—not an unusual act, it might seem, for most head men of higher education institutions are well used to traveling from one committee meeting to another. It's part of the job.

In this instance, however, Cross was flying to meet both a high honor and a raft of highly important duties. A White House committee had recently been formed to build popular support for President Eisenhower's foreign aid program, and Cross had become the first U. S. academic leader chosen to serve on it.

Interviewed, the University's president admitted that he hadn't been told just how he had come to be chosen a member of the group. "I suppose they wanted a college president from the Southwest," he smiled.

"The committee isn't a lobby group," he continued. "This is an educational venture."

President Eisenhower's Mutual Assistance Program—for which the committee works—has as its objectives the desire on the part of the United States to diminish the causes of war, to give the world a more secure peace than the arms race can give, to increase world understanding, and to keep the responsibilities of world leadership.

Actually, one might term the program's purpose as a giant move to enable countries desiring to remain independent of the Soviet economic orbit to do so. Such an economic orbit naturally leads to political control.

Heading the committee is Eric Johnston. Other members include Cross; Nelson Rockefeller, chairman of the president's commission on government organizations; T. V. Houser, top executive of Sears-Roebuck; Ernest R. Breech, executive of the Ford motor company, and Norman Chandler, head of the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper.

The Washington meeting began with a luncheon. Conversation was "typical luncheon conversation," said Cross, with Mr. Eisenhower discussing many subjects ranging from politics to golf.

Mr. Eisenhower seemed vigorous and peppy, and he dominated the get-together, explaining the program and the problems of public acceptance. The committee's job, it soon became apparent, would be to help the public to see the program's aims. Another job would be to raise money through gifts; the money would be received by a tax-exempt corporation now being formed for this one purpose.

The American public, as Cross sees it, is prone to regard the foreign aid program as "either a giveaway or an attempt to buy friends." Because of the pressure which this attitude produces on legislators, Congress isn't free to support the foreign aid program as much as it thinks it should.

Ways to convince the public of the need for the \$3.9 billion Mutual Assistance Program will be suggested in months to come at a series of meetings between Mr. Eisenhower and representative U. S. leaders.

Some of the urgency of the program was passed on to the committee by Vice President Richard Nixon, who impressed Cross as "having plenty of self-assurance in a



DR. GEORGE CROSS
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quiet, unobtrusive way." Nixon made "a fine contribution" in summing up the problem of public attitude. A man with a lot of ability and great fluency in expressing himself, he seemed more eager to impress the committee with the seriousness of the problem than with himself.

All the committee members seemed able, interested in the problem. One, Rockefeller, raised several good questions, particularly about methods of making donors feel that they can trust the committee to make wise use of their money. "Rockefeller is very pleasant," was Cross' impression. "He is a jovial, fun-loving type of man, more of an extrovert than I had pictured him."

Cross expressed, after his return, a belief that Americans are not as well informed about governmental policies as they should be. "Too, the rough-and-tumble American politics often deliberately confuses the public."

News releases which contradict one another add to the public's misunderstanding. "One day someone says that the Russians are six years ahead of us, and next day someone else says that we're only two months behind. And, of course," Cross smiled, "some political figures make statements for publicity."

He personally favors foreign aid similar to that of the Point Four plan.

"The really effective foreign aid is that which helps people to better themselves. We've failed in the Middle East by paying too much attention to kings and Cadillacs, not enough to peasants and water. Again, only that type of aid which enables people to improve themselves is useful."