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I think Dick Scott's memo raises a warning that we should heed about a potentially embarrassing problem. However, I do not agree with Dick's suggestions about tactics, "offensive footings" and a "defensive stance." I think it would be feasible to document the problem as best we can and inform the Minister in the context of our expected dialogue on the future of the Valley.

CHARLES JOHNSON
A-AD/DP

FORM NO.	DATE
ONE NO. 271	Dec. 6, 1973

090 - Sham. Dev

Mr. John Wilson - AGR

Dec. 4, 1973

Thru : Mr. Charles Johnson - A-AD/DP

R. B. Scott - DP

A Variation in Tactics: The Shamalan and Minister of Agriculture

On my recent visit to the Helmand Valley I talked with Mr. Gray and several of his technicians about the progress on the Shamalan Land Development Project. There was a great deal of continued criticism of the technical implications of what is being done and what is perhaps not going to be done. This does not include the land leveling and land consolidation parts of the original plan; these are long-dead issues. The criticisms do include, as I remember, the probable results of not completing an adequate and complete drainage system to offset the added water levels that will result from the upslope location of the new lateral, plus the greater amounts of water the farmers will be able to put on their land. The new lateral has been realigned to pass through the desert, perhaps one-quarter mile out from the escarpment which had been followed until some time last spring when a local Khan with a great deal of power refused to allow the lateral passage. The official reason for realignment was the problem of ground-water seepage. The real reason is probably some combination of the two. In any case, the new line of lateral construction eliminates this cumulatively difficult problem of getting "agreement" on right-of-way. But the new line raises at least two other problems: the lateral size is not adequate to water the land now to be included in the development, and there will likely be some major problems with water distribution because of some natural land rises to be crossed.

I will not, cannot, go into the technical details that the technicians attempted to explain to me, about which they were clearly distressed. The point is that the Shamalan Project has been developing in directions that our technicians know to be in error of an efficient system which, among other things, can result in taking some presently cultivated land out of production because of water-logging and salting. But with the basically hands-off policy we took (at the time when consideration was given to calling the loan) we no longer have any leverage and very little voice in major decisions like lateral realignment.

In terms of future accountability, however, we are in a position much like Morrison-Knudson was in, when they built the present Shamalan Canal in its less efficient location (the wrong place). Apparently M-K objected that the canal should follow

roughly the line suggested by the present Shamalan lateral feasibility study but for various reasons, costs among others, as contractors to the government they dug it where it is. (Most of this background is hearsay from earlier BuRec technicians who apparently saw the related documents. I have not.) As the old Shamalan remains an M-K project, the present Shamalan lateral will remain a USAID project, especially if and when the predicted problems occur. Since most of the major decisions on the Shamalan Project were made before the Coup, the Minister of Agriculture, the Governor, the new President of HAVA, and certainly the Prime Minister are not likely to know many of the details of the Shamalan renegotiations nor would they feel much responsibility if the lateral resulted in a minor disaster. But in all government eyes, and according to the farmers of the area, the Shamalan Project is and will remain a USAID project.

I suggest that we might use the Shamalan to our own tactical advantage by producing a relatively technical descriptive document of how the present construction is so far off the mark, as it relates to the feasibility study, that it requires a major, official objection and notification. The document should include the potential disastrous results that the present developments will likely produce. It could be noted that we feel that the COA is probably not aware of the present situation or what led up to it, but the document purpose is to spell it out for them, to put them on notice, and that we are repeating the objections stated at the time of our withdrawal from active participation.

First, it would serve the function of official notification, also for the records. Second, it would place us on a slightly more offensive footing in our dealings with the Minister of Agriculture, rather than remaining in the relatively defensive stance in which we seem to find ourselves.

In closing, we might ask the Minister what he plans to do about the situation, now that he knows the details. We could stand ready to make suggestions, if requested, making it clear that our technicians will be leaving the end of June (to some degree the results of inaction on the part of the Ministry).

The Minister of Agriculture apparently enjoys putting others on the spot. Perhaps similar tactics, which we have not attempted, as far as I know, could have the effect of establishing an awareness that we also expect a change from past relationships. The new tactic might also nudge the Ministry into some realistic exchanges on the future of the Helmand. While we may feel that the Shamalan is thankfully dead and buried, changes have been occurring that make it, it seems, even more unacceptable. Even the technicians involved will be gone by the end of June. But I suspect that as long as USAID is in the country, and certainly as long as we are in the Valley, we will have to live with it. Perhaps in a limited way, if only as a tactic in our negotiations, we can turn it to our advantage.

Copies:

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