Development anthropologists, where are you?

[that] involvement of farmer representatives in irrigation-system policy making facilitates arriving at policies accepted by farmers (sustainability again), is ... leading to "empowerment" of irrigated farmers. ... [A]s modern western and Japanese management ideas are introduced into irrigation bureaucracies, with their emphasis on participatory management and responsiveness to clients, ... we are going to see very important changes in these bureaucracies, initially internal adjustments, and later major structural reforms.

I must express my disappointment at how few anthropologists are contributing in the area of irrigation management—the field I know best. ... Development anthropologists, where are you?

From David Drucker, Independent Consultant, Bouilly, France:

... We seem to be short of a vigorous and innovative development of the practice of working with the rural poor as genuine partners (each with different things to share) in the processes of identifying the need and options for change.

This implies what might be termed primarily a "clinical" or an operational rather than a research-oriented task.

To date this operational experience is thin, fragmented, and unfocused, and has rarely contributed in a usable way the insights gained. Even narrative accounts could provide data towards a cumulative understanding of the dynamics of change in the way in which specific communities are able to contribute their understanding; take hold of unfamiliar concepts, ideas, and resources; modify these from their own experience; and make the problems, the objectives, the changes, and the processes truly their own—matters surely of great anthropological significance.

"Empowerment" is the word increasingly in vogue—all to the good, if it seriously alters the behavior of the AIDists...