

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT SARGENT SHRIVER, JR.,
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BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

One month ago in India, Ashadevi, an extraordinary woman and former associate of the late Mahatma Ghandi --- traveled three days and nights on a train to come to New Delhi to talk with me about the Peace Corps.

"Yours was the first revolution," she said. "Do you think young Americans possess the spiritual values they must have to bring the spirit of that revolution to our country?"

"There is a great valuelessness spreading around the world and in India, too," she said. "Your Peace Corps Volunteers must bring more than science and technology. They must touch the idealism of America and bring that to us, too.

"Can they do it?"

This, Mr. Chairman, is the important question being asked not only abroad but in this country as well" can we do it?

Three and one half months ago we set out to try to answer that question. In defining our objectives we relied heavily, of course, on the President's message to the Congress on the Peace Corps. The recommendations he made have stood up under the test of our experiences to date. Three of his major points have become increasingly clear as primary objectives for our work.

First, the Peace Corps can furnish trained manpower to bring needed skills to the service of other countries. We learned that the missing link in these newly-developing nations is often for "middle manpower"----men and women to do jobs until local people can be trained to take on this work themselves.

Ultimately, of course, education is the answer to the problems these nations face. They want neither charity nor handouts; what they seek is the brainpower, economic capacity and political stability to work out their own salvations. But the process of education, especially in a new society, is long and slow, and there are important jobs to be filled before that process can produce enough trained people. In one West African country, for example, secretaries to some of the government ministers are young women from France who have come to fill these positions because too few Africans are trained as stenographers, typists, or clerks. Critical shortages exist in almost every profession and every skill--in health, education, agriculture, business, government, and labor. One objective of the Peace Corps is to provide a temporary infusion of manpower to help meet those shortages.

A second and equally important objective is to give Americans an opportunity to learn about life in a non-western society and then to come home to share that knowledge with their fellow citizens.

What is happening in the underdeveloped half of the world is of crucial importance to the role of the United States in world affairs today. Yet, the American public is generally uninformed about the revolution taking place in societies where customs and traditions are in ferment. It is possible that the Peace Corps can help to build a constituency of Americans with a firsthand knowledge of what is happening in these countries.

Third, the Peace Corps hopes to give people in other countries an opportunity to learn more about America through the experience of living and working with Americans. Let me illustrate what I mean by quoting from a letter one of the members of the Peace Corps staff received from a friend in Pakistan:

"The success of your Peace Corps will depend not primarily on the link between the United States Government and my government, but between your people and our people, a link created by a surer understanding of the beliefs, languages, temperament, and---as a whole--- the individual national aims. One cannot understand or know his neighbor unless he visits him in his home, shares his views, understands his wants or desires, and allows a friendship to grow through mutual respect and regard, irrespective of caste, color, or creed."

The policy of the Peace Corps is for its volunteers to live a simple existence, allowing the greatest possible spirit of partnership and cooperation with the people with whom he works.

There is a great difference, however, between a noble idea, no matter how well conceived, and the execution of that idea in practical, realistic, down-to-earth terms.

As far as the Peace Corps was concerned, it was clear we had to get convincing answers to three important aspects of our problem in developing a viable, realistic Peace Corps program.

First, we had to know whether there was a genuine demand for Peace Corps services abroad. In other words, was there a market for the product we were intending to produce?

Second, was there an adequate supply of raw material, namely, the manpower we would try to mold into Peace Corps Volunteer workers?

Third, could we be sure that we could carefully screen and select, and then rigorously train, the personnel we would send abroad under the aegis of the Peace Corps?

We have given a great deal of time, thought and energy to finding the answers to these important questions. Today I think I can report to you with confidence that in each case the answer is yes.

In the first place, with respect to demand, we asked ourselves: Do other countries want, and will they welcome, Peace Corps Volunteers?

That demand soon became self-evident. Let me explain what I mean.

In response to invitations and expressions of interest on the part of leaders in Africa and Asia. I visited eight countries last month to discuss the Peace Corps. Prime Minister Nehru of India expressed a desire for agricultural extension workers to help meet his country's staggering need for food. Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana asked for plumbers, teachers, and electricians. He particularly wanted teachers -- teachers of science and math and many other subjects, teachers for his elementary schools and secondary schools and his universities as well.

President Garcia in the Philippines asked us to send teachers' aides to help bolster the teaching of English, his country's national language. Prime Minister U Nu of Burma wanted health workers-- sanitation engineers, nurses and nurses aides, medical technicians and doctors. And in all the other countries the needs were similar and urgent.

A recent cable from one country set forth its request for Peace Corps Volunteers. The ministries of agriculture, industry, health, and education in this country were asking--to mention only a few specific skills--for eight agricultural administration office managers, four surveyors, four teachers in horticulture and soil research, eight agriculture teacher trainers, five laboratory technicians, fifty nurses, two business administrators, and two economists. This cable was only one of a number of similar requests.

There is no doubt that an immense demand exists for talented Americans to do needed jobs in other countries.

The gap exists in the middle level for people who have skill and are willing to work hard. Requests are coming in every day for men and women with college, university, and professional training, for teaching, craft, art, farming, organizing, and leadership skills. Rather than advise and counsel the local people on how to accomplish their jobs, Peace Corps Volunteers will go to help do the work and in the process will teach local people to do it themselves.

Next came the question of supply. Are enough qualified Americans available and willing to spend two years in a tough assignment abroad?

We think the answer is yes.

In the first place, we have received about 11,000 completed applications.

Almost four thousand Americans of all ages took the first battery of Peace Corps examinations--despite the fact that the tests were given during final examination periods on many college and university campuses and despite the fact that our tests are purely voluntary.

Fifteen hundred took the second battery of tests. And we confidently expect an additional number at Peace Corps examinations in July because we have been receiving more than 100 new applications a day all through May and June.

There is another barometer of the response the Peace Corps has been getting: an analysis of the first 4800 eligible questionnaires. These interesting figures turn up:

Seven hundred twelve applicants have professional skills in operating a tractor. One hundred seventy-two can run a bulldozer. There were 616 people with professional skills as carpenters, 205 as surveyors, 295 as electricians, 193 as masons, and 196 in metal working. Three hundred seventy applicants had professional experience with biology lab equipment and 473 with chemical lab equipment. Two hundred and seventy were professional nurses.

Of the 4800 applicants, 1817 were college graduates and 1203 persons had one or more years of graduate work. One thousand of them can speak Spanish and another thousand can speak French.

But those are statistics. What of the flesh and blood behind them?

Some of you may have read the newspaper accounts this week describing the first Peace Corps volunteers selected for training for projects in Tanganyika and Colombia. I was impressed by the quality of those young men. I hope you were too. I would like to call to your attention some of the persons who were selected.

Peter VonChristierson is a 28-year-old Californian who is a graduate student of engineering at the University of North Carolina. He received his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Colorado and was a student counselor there, working in a project involving the discipline and morale of 120 students.

Peter DeSimone of Connecticut is 24 and employed as a structural draftsman for the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. He has worked as an apprentice carpenter on frame building construction in Bridgeport.

Gary Gaffner, who is 26 and a native of the State of Washington, has a bachelor of science degree in engineering and a master's degree in business administration from Stanford University. He has been a cost accountant, engineer, and sheet metal worker. He spent two years in the Army as a lieutenant and traveled in 92 countries. He's been active in Little League baseball, Boy Scouts, and YMCA work.

Don Preston is a 23-year-old surveyor from Michigan...Arthur Young is 28 and has worked as a civil engineer on highway design...Charles Barton, 25 years old, is employed by the United States Forest Service as a surveying instrument man in the construction of forest roads. He already has experience as a full survey crew chief.

These are but a few of those who have been chosen and I single them out only because they are representative of the kind of competent, well-trained volunteer we are getting in the Peace Corps.

I come now to the third important problem we faced in organizing the Peace Corps:

Once good Volunteers have been recruited, can we train them to do a needed job in a foreign country and to represent the best of American life in the countries where they serve?

Perhaps I can answer that by describing the training program that will begin Monday in El Paso, Texas, at Texas Western College, for the surveyors and engineers who will go to Tanganyika to survey feeder roads for that government.

The schedule begins at 5:30 every morning and ends at 9:00 p.m., six days a week. It includes studies in the culture of Tanganyika--its history, people, institutions, and traditions--plus medical training, courses in American studies, technical training, and physical conditioning.

Volunteers will study state highway specifications for different types of highways and terrain conditions. There will be reviews of soil theory and practice with emphasis on their use for drainage, base construction, and surfacing materials. Special emphasis will be given to design and construction of small bridges, grading and maintenance of culverts and drains, and other similar problems the Volunteer will face in Tanganyika. We are proud of the fact that the Texas Highway Department Division Office is cooperating to the fullest possible extent in this project. Four experts in their own areas of highway construction will assist Texas Western staff members in the instruction programs.

Courses in international affairs will include studies of communist theories and techniques, nationalism in Africa, and other specific issues which may confront the Volunteer in his work.

These procedures--and others which I have not mentioned for lack of time--are designed to give Peace Corps Volunteers the best possible orientation for their assignments. We want men and women who will succeed because they are physically, mentally, and spiritually fit to work with their heads, their hands, and their hearts in strange environments and under difficult circumstances.

In our attempts to find the answers to these questions we have had the best possible cooperation from the experienced men and women in private life who have operated overseas programs for voluntary, non-profit agencies or for academic institutions. We have enjoyed the encouraging support and cooperation of various

agencies of our own government and foreign governments as well. And -- I might add--we have had some very enlightening assistance from various members of Congress, their staffs, and the committees.

In carrying out our Peace Corps program we hope to utilize American universities and private voluntary agencies to the maximum. We have already had successful contacts resulting in actual agreements with a number of American universities and voluntary agencies including some of the most distinguished in our country. This initial experience encourages us to believe that we shall be successful in mounting a substantial proportion of our total effort through universities and voluntary agencies and thereby avoid the creation of another large governmental bureau.

We have come here today to ask your support for a new bill that will enable us to carry forward the work which we have begun on a pilot basis at the request of the President. We are ready to try to answer your questions as ably as we can, but I hope you will share my conviction that there are some questions about the Peace Corps that only time and experience will answer. On this occasion and in subsequent discussions we shall do our best to respond to your inquiries as clearly and succinctly as we can.

We in the Peace Corps feel a strong sense of responsibility to Congress and through Congress to the American people. We want to give an honest and faithful accounting of our stewardship to you and to your constituents.

We are under no illusions, Mr. Chairman. We know the Peace Corps is no panacea for all the ills of the world in general, or for any country in particular. We know there are problems ahead just as there is promise.

On the Great Seal of the United States is the date "1776" and an unfinished pyramid—a symbol which indicates that the task of extending human freedom and dignity is never done. We hope the Peace Corps can play a small part in this never-ending task. Our efforts will be successful if we can add in some small way to the growth of human freedom and dignity in the world.