

# News and Comment

## Peace Corps: Agency Flourishes as Congress Smiles, Numbers Grow, but Full Results Are Not Yet In

The Peace Corps, which established itself as a prodigy among agencies in its second year of operation by winning praise and a doubled appropriation from an originally skeptical Congress, seems also to have won a welcome in many underdeveloped nations as a bearer of science and Western technology.

Among the groups of volunteers training this summer for overseas assignment will be recruits for a geology project for Ghana, a university science and mathematics teaching program for the Philippines, a nurses program for the Dominican Republic, and a public works project for engineers and surveyors in Tunisia.

The requirement of a fairly high level of technical competence for volunteers in these projects does not indicate that the Peace Corps is out primarily to recruit the technically trained. Both specialists and generalists, in fact, are needed, as both have been needed since the Peace Corps got started. And many projects continue to be of the "community development" type in which Peace Corps volunteers with general skills and training, working either in rural areas or cities, are expected to help organize cooperative efforts on a wide variety of projects to improve community life. The projects may involve basic sanitation, local agricultural methods, construction of a school, or a combination of these, but the aim is to demonstrate the techniques and the benefits of self-help and community organization.

There is, however, no question that many underdeveloped countries see the Peace Corps as a ready source of the technicians and other specialized manpower which they themselves conspicuously lack.

When Peace Corps director R. Sar-

gent Shriver testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1961 on the bill to establish the Peace Corps, he said that filling this manpower need was a major purpose of the proposed agency. "We learned," said Shriver, "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 the work themselves."

"Ultimately," he told the senators, "education is the answer to these problems these nations face. . . . But the process of education, especially in a new society, is long and slow, and there are important jobs to be filled before the process can produce enough trained people."

In the period after President Kennedy's inauguration when the Peace Corps was still, legally, a gleam in Shriver's eye, a number of members of Congress objected that Peace Corps activities might conflict with technical-assistance projects under the foreign-aid program. Spokesmen for the Peace Corps assured the legislators that there would be no duplication by pointing out that Peace Corps volunteers would not be going abroad as technical experts and advisers, as most foreign-aid employees do, but would be undertaking operational tasks, or, as Shriver himself said, they would be "doers, workers."

These assurances apparently quieted most Congressional misgivings on the point, but if the Peace Corps should become heavily involved in major construction or reclamation projects, these questions will probably be raised again on Capitol Hill.

Partly at least, because of this potential pitfall, the Peace Corps has hewed closely to its "middle manpower" concept, and the Peace Corps effort can be described, very broadly, as an experiment in education designed to work both ways.

As a supplier of teachers, in the

conventional sense, the Peace Corps's heaviest demands come from the new nations of Africa where an ardor for education appears to be a corollary of the pride of independence.

In the early days of the Peace Corps Sargent Shriver made a flying tour of several Asian and African countries to inquire if the Peace Corps would be accepted. Premier Nehru of India told Shriver that India would welcome agricultural extension workers to help with his country's great need for food, while Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana, said Shriver, "particularly wanted teachers, teachers of science and mathematics and many other subjects, teachers for his elementary schools and secondary schools and his universities as well."

As of April 15 there were more than 1300 Peace Corps volunteers working in Africa. A majority of these are teachers, and the greatest demand in the African nation continues to be for teachers, particularly teachers of science and mathematics. Mastery of science and technology is accepted in Africa as a recipe for personal and national success, and, according to one Peace Corps training officer, "Africa would take all the science and mathematics teachers we could send them."

In practice, the number of science and mathematics teachers the Peace Corps can send is limited. Although there have been instances of "pinpoint recruiting" for qualified people to handle specialized assignments in agriculture, for instance, or physics teaching, Peace Corps recruiters seldom beat the bushes for prospects with specific skills. The general policy is to fill the jobs at hand out of a pool of applicants with persons who have suitable skills and can be trained to do the work.

The Peace Corps has felt that it might incur resentment if it recruited actively in school systems and on college campuses, and relatively few school teachers or college faculty members are now serving in the Peace Corps. A number of school systems have recently passed regulations granting their teachers who elect to serve in the Peace Corps 2-year leaves of absence without loss of tenure or other benefits, but Peace Corps officials say that the effect of this action won't be discernible until this summer.

In Africa, the typical Peace Corps teachers in elementary and secondary schools are liberal arts graduates who were given special courses during their

training period on the subjects they expected to teach. Some, apparently, have been diverted to other subjects by local needs and preferences. It is not unusual, for example, for the principal of an African high school, when he learns that a Peace Corps teacher has had high school or college chemistry, to assign him to teaching a chemistry course, often without benefit of textbooks or equipment, because such a course is so radiant a status symbol for an African school.

Few Peace Corps teachers can expect to find full stocks of books or ideally equipped laboratories. And because it is Peace Corps doctrine that American volunteers operate on equal terms with other teachers in the schools abroad, the Peace Corps does not attempt to send books and equipment along with the volunteer. Individual initiative, however, is not discouraged. Many volunteers, once there, wangle supplies themselves, and in some cases American schools and organizations have sent teaching materials to schools where Peace Corps teachers have been assigned.

Peace Corps training is designed to take into account the austerity conditions most teachers will encounter on their assignments overseas. For example, volunteers training as science or mathematics teachers in a secondary school program for the Philippines last summer each got 125 hours' instruction in biology, chemistry, mathematics, or physics during their 10-week training.

The "refresher" courses were based on the new reformed curricula for high schools, developed under the science-course-improvement projects supported by the National Science Foundation, but the trainees were taught to adapt the course work and laboratory experiments to the conditions under which they would teach.

For Peace Corps college teaching, academic credentials count more than they do for elementary and secondary teaching. The Peace Corps also feels that, to be effective in a university post, a volunteer needs a firm command of the language of the host country. Peace Corps projects in university education have a relatively high attrition rate in training, therefore, because of standards set on language proficiency. The difficulty of finding qualified volunteers to teach science and math is, of course, increased by the demand for graduates in those fields here. The Peace Corps, however, has been able to maintain a modest flow of

these projects by finding people with, so to speak, transferable skills. Typical, perhaps, is the engineering graduate of the late 1950's who is now teaching first-year physics students in a new rural university in Latin America.

In Latin America the pattern of demand for Peace Corps volunteers contrasts with that in Africa. A majority of the Peace Corps's workers are engaged in, or are training for, agricultural extension work or community action programs in the rural areas or cities. The demand for teachers is relatively weaker than in Africa, despite Latin America's generally low literacy rate and lack of effective mass education. The coolness toward Peace Corps teachers is attributed by some to a deepseated fear of *Yanqui* cultural aggression through the schools.

At the university level, however, Latin American institutions are not strong in technology, and it is in this area, particularly, that the Peace Corps has been asked to help. Bolivia, for example, is hopeful about some newly discovered oil deposits, and a shopping list of specialists for a Peace Corps university program for Bolivian institutes of technology includes calls for instructors in petroleum instrumentation and pumps and motors as well as in thermodynamics and hydraulics.

This relative restraint in welcoming teachers does not, however, mean that the Peace Corps's reception in Latin America has been chilly. Peace Corps effort in Latin America is concentrated on community development and agricultural projects which are closely linked to the Alliance for Progress and its emphasis on self-help and social progress. The Peace Corps's Latin-American program is scheduled to double in fiscal 1964, to a total of 6150 volunteers there, about half the planned total Peace Corps strength.

To finance fiscal '64 operations for a Peace Corps of 13,000, the President has asked for \$108 million. On form, the Peace Corps should get most of this from Congress. The agency's first appropriation in fiscal 1962 was \$30 million, cut \$10 million from a requested \$40 million. Last year Congress voted \$59 million of a requested \$63 million.

On 15 April there were 4096 volunteers abroad and another 864 in training for a total of 4960 volunteers, 3151 men and 1809 women. The aim is to have 10,000 overseas by the first of the year.

The performance of the Peace Corps

to date seems to have allayed the early apprehensions of Congress, which ranged from suspicions that the Peace Corps would be a sort of nonviolent foreign legion for maladjusted post-adolescents to fears that young Americans would go like ideological lambs to the slaughter at the hands of Communist agitators and propagandists.

By adhering to a policy of going where it is invited and doing what it is asked to do, the Peace Corps appears to have minimized the political risks. The agency's most venturesome project may prove to be the one being undertaken by 20 volunteers now training to teach physical education and coach sports in Indonesia, where many students are anti-Western and where the president of Communist China has just concluded a friendly visit.

Two years ago Congress enacted legislation creating the Peace Corps as an "experimental" program. The President this year indicated by word and deed—a big boost in the budget—that he regarded the Peace Corps's probation as ended. But although Congress approves and the agency has had a generally good press here and abroad, the Peace Corps is still an experiment, with results uncertain.

From the outset, Peace Corps advocates saw three main purposes for the agency: to furnish needed middle manpower to underdeveloped countries; to give Americans an opportunity to learn about life in non-Western societies and share their knowledge with other Americans; and to give people in other countries the chance to learn what Americans are really like close up and on the job.

The first contingents of 2-year volunteers are scheduled to complete their service and come home this summer, and only then can a start be made toward judging what they have accomplished, what they have learned, whether, in short, the Peace Corps idea really works.—JOHN WALSH

### **Federal Science: NSF Publishes a Guide To a Growing Activity**

For anyone interested in the growth in the scope and status of the scientific activities of the federal government, a hefty new 598-page report by the National Science Foundation is recommended skimming.

The publication is *Federal Organization for Scientific Activities*, 1962 (for sale by the Superintendent of Docu-