

AS WE SEE IT
AFL-CIO Public Service Program

Sunday, May 21, 1961
American Broadcasting Company

SUBJECT: "Labor's Role in the Peace Corps"

PARTICIPANTS: Senator Hubert Humphrey
Joseph A. Beirne
Cornelius J. Haggerty
Harry Pollak

MODERATOR: Harry W. Flannery

FLANNERY: AS WE SEE IT!

HUMPHREY: Let me make it quite clear right now: No one should volunteer for the Peace Corps, no one should even take the time of the administrative staff of the Peace Corps if he isn't willing to recognize that he is literally going into the peacetime fox holes to fight for freedom.

FLANNERY: Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, who will introduce the bill that will give legislative life to the Peace Corps thus expressed himself in an interview for this radio station of the ABC network and the AFL-CIO.

Main subject of discussion was trade union participation in the Peace Corps. Also present were three AFL-CIO advisors to the Corps:

Joseph Beirne, AFL-CIO vice president and president of the Communications Workers of America;

Cornelius J. Haggerty, president of the Building and Construction Workers department,

and Harry Pollak, member of the AFL-CIO department of international affairs.

This broadcast is from the office of Senator Humphrey in the Senate Office Building here in Washington. Your reporter, Harry W. Flannery.

Mr. Haggerty, up until now there has been little attention paid to labor participation in the Peace Corps.

HAGGERTY: Harry, that is true, but I think there is, recently, a new impetus which requires, I think, a little more stimulation and a little more push on the part of those responsible for the organization of Peace Corps. I am sure that labor has a role to play and wants to play a role that is very important in this world-wide project. We are concerned that our people at the local level understand this because we have thousands of people, I am sure, who would love to be in the program, take part in it and make a contribution to it; and I am hoping that as we go along we will be able to have a greater part in the program, not just on the national but on the local levels as well.

FLANNERY: Mr. Beirne, I believe that the Postal, Telephone and Telegraph Workers trade center to which you belong is already operating in South America with a cooperative.

BEIRNE: Yes, we are and have been. The Peace Corps itself is a wonderful idea if we get the kind of dedicated people, not just the college and young men type but the retired worker who has spent a lifetime building his community, building his home, building his family and who knows the ideals which have brought America to the high pinnacle of success it has.

In Ecuador, we have been working for the last two years through our Postal Telephone and Telegraph to develop the understanding of cooperatives in that country among the worker group and we have succeeded. They do understand what cooperatives are, how they work, and they have joined together to build for themselves necessary houses in that country.

It must be understood that in that part of the world, that is so close to us -- geographically -- 70 per cent of the people are in ignorance, disease-ridden and in poverty and we have to reach them. We can't just go into the big cities where the water is nice and the food is great. We have to get back out into the country where there are no facilities, where people don't even have roofs over their heads at night, don't have a bed to lie in or a pillow to put their head on. We have to reach them with the kind of people who have the tough stuff of the early pioneers of America to bring our message to them as our message was brought to the Western part of the United States way back in the early days.

FLANNERY: Mr. Pollak, you have been working regularly as a staff member over at the Peace Corps several days a week, I believe; do you find that there is a greater appreciation of the role of labor in the Peace Corps?

POLLAK: Yes, Harry, there is a greater appreciation of the role of labor in the Peace Corps. As you have said, I am working over at the Peace Corps on a two-day a week assignment by President Meany. We consider the Peace Corps a serious project. We want to be able to help in all ways possible. This has been recognized, of course, on the top advisory committee by the fact that both Neil Haggerty and Joe Beirne are members and what we are trying to find out is just what the Peace Corps wants to do in the labor field. What kind of projects do the unions in those countries want to undertake? Our people want the basic facts, they are not satisfied in getting a general request to go abroad, they want to know specifically what.

FLANNERY: Senator Humphrey, your bill will introduce the Peace Corps legislatively and give it life. Can there be specifics in the bill that will see that labor plays its important part in the corps?

HUMPHREY: I believe so, we have been waiting for the recommendations of the new agency for the legislation. It seems to me that one thing that we need is a demonstration project -- the kind of project that is being considered now by the Peace Corps to see just how it will operate in the field. To put it to work seems to me is the real test. But in the basic legislation, I think, we ought to lay down some guide lines.

The Peace Corps is not merely a youth project -- I mean just for youngsters -- of course, we want the pep, vitality, enthusiasm, energy and imagination of young people, but we also need maturity. We need experience, and it seems to me that in the labor field, particularly among people who have had a vast amount of experience in union organization and the leadership of local unions, or at the state, international or national level -- laboring people with that kind of experience are equipped to be directors, group leaders or staff leaders for teams of Peace Corps personnel that may go into a particular area. We are going to need people from labor that can teach elementary construction -- in the building trades. I mean out in the village level as Mr. Beirne was saying. The problems that we are seeking to meet are not the problems only in the big cities of some of the so-called underdeveloped countries but the back country -- the people who do not have education, the people who do not even have elementary skills, the people who do not have health facilities. And, I am sure that here is a great opportunity for the labor movement to play a part.

And the labor movement does understand organization and it has experienced organizers. Here is a place where the labor movement -- through its personnel in the Peace Corps could play a part in the organization of voluntary groups in the host countries -- groups for many things. Voluntarism is a part of the American pattern of life. Regrettably, it is not so much a part of many other areas of the world. I was pleased to hear of the postal and telegraph workers in Equador.

We need credit unions. The real financing needed is at the village level and if you can get a credit union going, you are making a real contribution. I don't mean getting it just going but keeping it going and training people to use it, how to protect it and develop it. And, the same thing would be true of consumer cooperative, group health programs, community clinics. Here are places and activities where the older person, the retired person, or somebody right out of the ranks of a great trade union could be of immense help. I think we will have to spell some of this out in the guide lines of legislation.

FLANNERY: In this kind of an operation, Senator, the main point is to have these people help themselves and give directions so that they can help themselves, I imagine. Now, have any of you gentlemen any questions that you would like to ask Senator Humphrey in connection with this?

Yes, Mr. Beirne.

BEIRNE: When you travel into these countries, especially Latin America -- you notice the great difference in our standards. Unless you have a dedication to the task you are about to do, you very easily can slip into the ugly American's role of wanting your own car, your own kind of bottled water to drink. You embarrass the native whose standard is not as high as yours. In the guide lines, are we going to have the kind of standards, are we going to have the kind of protection wherein the American who goes, may be enthused to begin with and sees the utter degeneration of the place he is in, then wants to live like an American back home? Are we going to be able to rip him back home right away before he does us more harm than good?

HUMPHREY: Well, I think we ought to look upon this enterprise as a sort of a war that we are fighting, Mr. Beirne. Thank goodness it is a peaceful one, but this isn't an ICA project or foreign aid project where we send highly professionalized people and ask them to go for a limited period of time in an advisory and consultative capacity. The Peace Corps is not technical assistance alone, it is work assistance, getting where people get right down and work with the people and don't stand up as a boss over the people or as a supervisor or as a coordinator. It's fellow Americans working with people of the host country, and I mean with the people.

To get to your question, there will, undoubtedly be times -- and there will be many instances -- where any American comes to a country and finds conditions beyond what he ever dreamed and beyond what he thinks he can endure. If that is the case, he should be brought home, because to try to segregate our own people from the very people we are attempting to be of help to will, I think, destroy the effectiveness of the program.

Let me make it quite clear right now: No one should volunteer for the Peace Corps, no one should even take the time of the administrative staff of the Peace Corps if he isn't willing to recognize that he is literally going to go into what we call the peacetime fox holes to fight for freedom. He isn't going to be bombarded with atom bombs. He isn't going to be shot at with machine guns or handgrenades or run down by tanks, but he is going to have to live in conditions that are not anything like he had at home and he ought to be prepared for it -- he or she. He will be bombarded with the possibility of disease and all kinds of privations but modern medical care and training, I think, will give the individual a good deal of protection.

We have been able to train men to live in the most unbelievable circumstances. We have even trained a man to go into outer space and we have trained people to go to the North Pole and the South Pole. Men in World War II were trained to fight almost like savages in jungle warfare and come back and live a normal life. Our people have been put through every kind of experience and if they condition themselves for it -- if they know what they are going into, I think most of them will be able to endure it. And, not only that, they

will feel that they made a real contribution. So, let's take a look at it as a real operation of patriotism and dedication, and you are really a freedom fighter -- that's what it amounts to.

FLANNERY: Pardon the interruption, gentlemen, but our time is up for this week. We shall continue in the next program. In this discussion, ladies and gentlemen, were Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota; Joseph Beirne, AFL-CIO vice president and president of the Communications Workers; Cornelius J. Haggerty, president of the Building and Construction Workers department, and Harry Pollak, member of the AFL-CIO department of international affairs.

Your reporter, Harry W. Flannery, invites you to be with us next week at this same time when AS WE SEE IT again comes as a presentation of the AFL-CIO and ABC public affairs.

This program has been brought to you by the ABC network and the affiliated stations to which you are listening.

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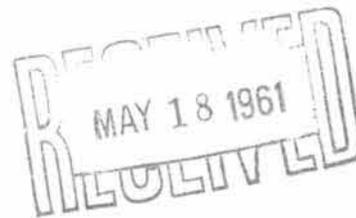
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May 17, 1961

The Honorable Hubert Humphrey
The Senate Office Building
Washington 25, D. C.



Dear Senator:

Many thanks for your cooperation with the recent program in the AS WE SEE IT series.

Enclosed is a transcript of the program and a picture which was taken at the time of the taping. Also you will be interested in seeing the publicity story which the ABC radio network sent out to editors.

If you would like to have additional copies, please let us know.

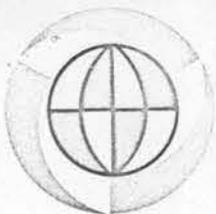
Cordially yours,

Harry W. Flannery
Radio Coordinator

HWF:mb
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Enclosure

[* Because Transferred to
Audio-Visual Dept,
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Sept 1971]



May 12, 1961

ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN PEACE CORPS

PROBED ON "AS WE SEE IT" MAY 21

The new Peace Corps and the role trade unions will play in it will be discussed on "As We See It" Sunday, May 21 (ABC Radio, 12:15 p.m. EDT. Editors: Please check local station program schedules).

Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D.-Minn.), who will introduce legislation in Congress to authorize the Corps, will discuss the trade union role with three AFL-CIO officials. The union panelists will be Joseph A. Beirne, a vice president of the AFL-CIO and President of the Communications Workers of America; Cornelius J. Haggerty, Director of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department; and Harry Pollak, of the AFL-CIO Department of International Affairs.

The three men have been assigned by the AFL-CIO as advisors to the Peace Corps organization. Harry W. Flannery, radio coordinator for the AFL-CIO, will conduct the program.

LOG LINE

AS WE SEE IT--Sen. Hubert Humphrey and officials of the AFL-CIO discuss the role trade unions will play in the new Peace Corps.

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