

REMARKS

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INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE

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↳ When Bill Delano told me about the plans being laid for the ISVS World Assembly in New Delhi, I told him I wanted to be on hand to put in a plug.

I have a very selfish motive in mind. The volunteer movement has now spread to about ninety countries.

↳ In each of those countries there is experience being accumulated which I think ought to be shared by everybody.

↳ I want to do everything I can to help bring that experience out into the open because it is my conviction that this movement contains within it a whole new dimension in international cooperation.

↳ We in the United States have a great need to import some of this experience . . . not just to make our "export" volunteer program, the Peace Corps, most useful . . . but also to improve our own domestic volunteer programs here at home -- VISTA and the Job Corps.

↳ Despite any appearances to the contrary, we didn't invent the idea of voluntary service. The idea is rooted in one form or another in every major culture of the world.

↳ From Moses to Mahatma Gandhi, great men throughout history have turned the tide of events in their time by volunteering their energy and example to affirm the possibility of a better life.

↳ In our time this affirmation is ~~led~~^{led} not by the old and venerable -- but by the young. And not by the famous and exceptional -- but by thousands of anonymous men and women expressing themselves in thousands of acts of good works.

And that is as it should be. For when it comes to communicating hope to those millions no longer willing to acquiesce in lives of poverty, it is the new generation -- not the old -- which has the right words and the necessary compassion.

↳ I hope that each one of you here today will urge your governments to send representatives of your voluntary organizations to this great assembly.

↳ I hope you will decide that this fledgling international organization deserves to be accepted as a permanent resource in the international community.

↳ I hope you will do this simply in your own self-interest.

When I say we have an awful lot to learn from each other in this business of volunteer service, I mean no small advantage.

↳ We do not lack for prescriptions for development . . . We do not lack expert advisers nearly so much as we lack

effective communicators.

↳ And it isn't simply a matter of carrying a message from the wise and powerful to the weak and ignorant.

↳ When it comes to development, none of us is that wise or powerful.

↳ We must hear from those we seek to help if we are to avoid seeing our efforts dissipated in disillusion and self-righteousness.

↳ And if there is to be this two-way communication, what substitute is there for the thousands of channels made possible by the volunteer movement.

↳ We are just experimenting with these thoughts here in the United States. We have only begun to learn.

↳ If in the end we have something to give as a result of our experience, it will only be because we learned from the experience of others first.

↳ In 1962 the United States invited forty-one nations to a conference on volunteer service in Puerto Rico.

↳ This year forty-four nations, hosted by the Government of India, are inviting the world to sit in while the same subjects are deliberated. ↳ ~~We all owe India a vote of thanks~~ (Keep) for ~~extending its gracious hospitality.~~ ↳ ~~And how appropriate it is for in India men and women have been practicing what we preach for more than four thousand years.~~

↳ I have one thought in conclusion.

Why should we not look forward to the day when it will be common practice in all countries for young men and women to volunteer for a period to give their help somewhere -- somehow -- in this world of ours?

↳ Is this too visionary?

Or is some such expression just what is needed if we are to engineer an escape from the predicament of poverty which is so commonplace?

Is our poverty of imagination so great that we cannot create such an opportunity?

In any case, I think it is vitally important that we keep asking these questions and building the case for affirmative answers out of the material of the experience which the volunteer movement is accumulating in so many ways and in so many countries.

We need this international forum.

Let us not fail to keep it alive . . . and to listen to what is said in it.

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