



## Are S.C.I.-services a genuine contribution to peace ?

Ralph Hegnauer (25.3.1951)

Peace is certainly not a passive uniformity. It is an essentially active value. It is a state of mind and may be described as the milestone on the way from life of mere instincts to spiritual self-realisation from which on the natural differences between individuals and peoples are finding solutions on non-violent grounds. Differences and conflicts may be the very roots of life which just seems to spring up out of increasing and decreasing tension. But, where unity may prove an illusion, disunity balanced on justice and equality in terms of rights and duties can be achieved. Mutual respect, tolerance, non-violence are basic requirements to develop from an atmosphere of war to the atmosphere of PEACE.

There are many techniques and methods to promote peace. International voluntary workcamps are one Of the many possible techniques. On the other hand it is a method which can also be used for very honourable but quite different aims : party-political, confessional - communal, mere economical ones - even for aims with underlying national selfishness or last of power of dominating groups which may be less honourable and may rather be a misuse of the enthusiasm and creed of people's desire to serve.

S.C.I.'s use of this technique is clearly on the lines of aiming to peace-making. Everybody is welcomed (not only as a tolerated minority but as the very substance), regardless of race, creed, class, nationality and whatever may be his beliefs in so far as the organised training for warfare is concerned. All what is asked is : to be ready to make substantial personal efforts in the work and of self-discipline to fit into the group life by an attitude and of tolerance towards the viewpoint of the others.

We think that the natural virtues in each person which, at present, are mainly used for what we consider destructive aims : coercion, violence, warfare and its training for it, could be used for constructive aims such as : mutual help, international solidarity, self-administration, development of balanced personalities free from fear and pronounced selfishness. In this sense, S.C.I. helps to provide legal provision for civilian service for Conscientious Objectors to military service in countries where there exists conscription.

We ask for personal efforts. Physical pain may involved, psychological suffering may be an outcome of the need to adjust oneself to the group life in favour of higher aim. While on service, members are expected to make a gift of themselves to the cause. We ask, therefore much and offer little, except the opportunity to search - and find according to individual efforts.

Our services are, therefore a deliberate effort to promote PEACE. In a limited sense, it is true, for the individuals who want to go further on the way to radical pacifism. These persons have to develop new methods and techniques. The majority of human beings have still to make the first steps.

But are international voluntary work-services on peace-making grounds a mere technique? Peace-making requires a great amount patience. All constructive changes in human beings need time to grow and develop. We are failing every day; we never attain the standard of our ideals - but it is important that we walk constantly in the direction which leads us to spiritual unity. Through personal efforts, faith, fidelity everybody can come to deeper insights and, thus , work for PEACE making a contribution, small or big.

Externally work-services have to be adapted to needs, circumstances and situations. The basis, the underlying philosophy and principles of our deeds have to be safeguarded by constant re-examination. They have to be changed only when the change means a deepening.



A good S.C.I.-service will have fulfilled its purpose when, as a consequence some people start to realise that "there can be a service of love" as a volunteer once stated. May we add: "in spite of all individuals shortcomings"?

May the services not be something more than a mere technique or method to achieve a noble aim? - They may be for many an experience of the possibility of a new way of life. They may help to change basically our conceptions, they may even be - in a certain extents - an opportunity to live PEACE.