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OFFICE OF  
THE DIRECTOR

# ACTION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20525

NOV 21 1976

November 19, 1976

Mr. John O. Marsh, Jr.  
Counsellor to the President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Marsh:

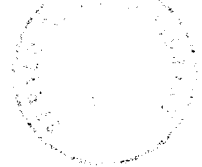
As you requested, ACTION has developed the following concise status report of the highest priority issues with which the agency is currently dealing:

1. Status of Authorizing Legislation

The ACTION Agency is now functioning partly under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act, enacted in 1973 for an initial 3-year period, and since extended through September, 1978, partly under an Executive Order (with respect to the Peace Corps).

In the case of the Peace Corps, a new annual authorization has to be obtained each year. There are many unnecessary and undesirable provisions in, and inconsistencies between, ACTION's domestic and international programs.

The Agency has developed a comprehensive revision and consolidation of both acts into a unified bill, and last year successfully completed its clearance by other Federal agencies. This bill would provide three-year authorizations for all programs, assure an integrated personnel system within the Agency, standardize a number of provisions pertaining to the use of volunteers, and eliminate a number of unnecessary provisions. This Omnibus Bill also provides a clear statement of Congressional Mission and intent for the Agency, so that its broad purposes would no longer be a matter of dispute.



2. Volunteer Assistance in Meeting the Urban Crisis

One of the most difficult problems the new Administration faces is to determine what forms of assistance should be provided to the large number of major cities which have suffered the worst degrees of deterioration, both in economic resources and in urban living conditions, during the past decade.

The residents of these cities can and must play a major role in restoring economic vitality to their cities and in preserving viable neighborhoods and communities. For many citizens, service either as full-time or as part-time volunteers will be an effective means of helping maintain essential municipal services, developing neighborhood self-help organizations, providing community services, etc. ACTION has developed and included in its FY 1978 budget request a new Urban Service Volunteer Program, for which the first full-year cost is estimated at \$20 million. This program will provide funds for planning city-wide and neighborhood-level volunteer projects, and for carrying out such projects, under a block-grant approach using all of ACTION's different types of assistance.

3. Increasing Technical Assistance to Strengthen Private Voluntarism at Home and Abroad

Public Law 94-293, signed last May 27th, and amendments to Title 3 of the Peace Corps Act which ACTION has proposed in its FY 1978 budget submission, both stress the importance of the Agency's provision of technical assistance to help both new and existing non-profit voluntary groups and organizations increase their programs effectiveness, expand their capability for solving the problems they deal with, and improve their organizational and management systems for recruitment, training, and assignment of volunteers.

This new responsibility was initiated in three areas in domestic programs in FY 1976: (1) ACTION is developing relationships with public and private voluntary organizations to provide assistance and support at policy levels in voluntarism. (2) In the summer of 1976, an initial



three-month demonstration project was completed in five states -- California, Iowa, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Virginia to determine what kinds of problems voluntary organizations have in these states and what are the best means of providing technical assistance from ACTION. The demonstrated effort provided technical assistance in areas of recruiting, training, managing, and programming volunteers within the public and private sectors. (3) A nationwide needs assessment survey begun in FY 1976 will be completed in Spring 1977. The purpose of this survey is to assess needs of private and nonprofit volunteer organizations and to recommend technical assistance activities and components which ACTION might provide to assess those needs. The study is the first major effort undertaken in the private sector.

On the international side, the most important event which led to mutual cooperation and requests for technical assistance was: (1) the International Conference on Volunteer Service, sponsored by ACTION from June 27 - July 2, 1976, which was held at Palais Auersperg in Vienna, Austria. (2) The principal objective of the International Conference on Volunteer Service was to bring together people involved with the promotion, development, support, coordination and funding of volunteer programs to exchange ideas and experiences. No formal resolutions were scheduled; no draft agreements were to be put up for debate; and there were no plans for the occasion to be anything other than an opportunity to assess voluntarism as it presently exists and to explore its potential impact on development. (3) ACTION anticipated that as a result of the Conference, there would be requests from other countries to: (a) join in multi-national projects, (b) exchange staff and volunteers, and (c) provide technical assistance to other service programs. These anticipated requests have in fact become a reality. As of this writing, four months after the Conference, ACTION has received requests for technical information/assistance from thirty-two countries. In thirteen of these countries the Peace Corps has no operational programs.

ACTION has developed and included in its FY 1978 budget request approximately \$2,000,000 for Special International Volunteer Programs and an additional \$1,500,000 for Technical Assistance for Private Voluntarism for Domestic Volunteer efforts.

#### 4. The Future of Export Volunteers

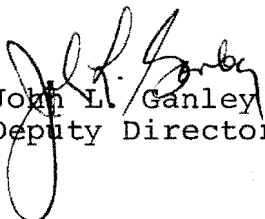
Since its beginning in 1961, the Peace Corps' people-to-people volunteer assistance model has been replicated by more than 15 industrialized countries. Today, host countries are fifteen years more developed, more sophisticated in their development needs, and (as more qualified people become available in these countries) increasingly demanding in terms of requests for higher level "technician" skills. Peace Corps, and the other programs which export foreign technically skilled manpower, operate on a government-to-government basis; their planning is often subordinated by the government of the host country. This situation in which the export programs cannot fully control or evenly relate their available supply of volunteer skills to the demands and needs of host countries, coupled with the growing trend of developing nations toward nationalism, has greatly contributed to a diminishing role for export volunteer services and has produced a continuing decline in the number of Peace Corps volunteers overseas.

In a parallel move, host countries have, over the past fifteen years, developed an enormous array of indigenous volunteer and domestic development service schemes which mobilize manpower for national development objectives.

The continued viability of the international export volunteer community will largely depend on the extent to which (1) host government requests for external assistance can be efficiently met while, at the same time, (2) cooperative relationships can be developed with host country volunteer and private sector entities involving the assignment and support of export volunteers.

The relevance of export volunteer service will also depend on abilities to develop more acceptable, egalitarian assistance models which meets the particular needs of the developing countries. Through greater interdependence and increased cooperation with Peace Corps, export volunteer services, and the larger private foreign assistance community, new opportunities for future volunteer assistance is planned in FY 1978.

Sincerely,

  
John L. Ganley  
Deputy Director