

SERVICE CIVIL INTERNATIONAL
International Secretariat

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1. General

Reports about ES activities have been circulated regularly to the movement. People interested in details will, therefore, find these elsewhere. The following is an attempt to give an over-all picture and evaluations.

2. Travel and visits

On various occasions, the ES has visited branches, groups, projects, cooperating organisations and has attended committee meetings in Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands and Switzerland. The rest of the ES staff has also been involved in some of these visits. Most of the SCI national and international staff members, as well as committee members, representatives of cooperating organisations have come to Luxembourg for consultations and discussions.

3. Publicity and fundraising

A general report about SCI as a whole (25.000 copies) and a fundraising leaflet (10.000 copies) were published in French and English earlier this year. All this material, except for a few thousand copies to the English edition of the fundraising leaflet, has now been sold out. A special circular, "ES NEWS", has been produced regularly in order to improve communication and exchange of ideas within the movement and help stimulate particular activities, such as fundraising. A number of branches and groups have put great emphasis on public relations, publicity and fundraising. Some, namely the Dutch, Austrians, Italians und British have managed to utilize national mass-media to put their message and appeals through to the general public.

4. Training

International training courses were held in France, Great Britain and Scandinavia. National courses have been organised in almost every country with an SCI branch or group. Some had the specific purpose of providing orientation for LTVs or camp leaders already accepted for service, while others were aimed at stimulating potential leadership abilities among participants. An international sub-committee has been operating to help and advise on all aspects of training within SCI, but it is regretted that this has not been used to full advantage. The need for exchanging leaders has been widely expressed and suggestions have been made to hold international training courses at Christmas, so as to enable the participants to organise and lead national courses during the spring. As the number of experienced volunteers on all our projects is decreasing, good leadership is essential. Other forms of leadership are also being explored, such as collective leadership, and some projects led in this way have proved successful.

5. Conscientious Objectors

A number of branches and groups have been especially concerned with the problems of CO's, notably the Austrians, who also organised two successful projects which called the attention of national press and television to this matter. Some regress is apparent in Germany, where from the end of this year, SCI will no longer be allowed to organise alternative service projects for CO's. A questionnaire was sent out early this year to find out in what way and what extent branches / groups were involved in the CO question. The replies are being processed, and a report will be available soon. Cooperation with other bodies concerned has been maintained, and the ES also represented SCI at a special conference on CO's organised by the International Peace Bureau near Stuttgart. A survey on CO's and national service was produced and distributed recently.

6. Emergencies

Massive assistance was demanded from SCI, and from the Italian branch in particular, for the earthquake in Sicily in January of this year. Almost one thousand volunteers have been working in Sicily and some are still there. Failure to obtain sufficient funds caused considerable anxiety to those responsible for this programme, but somehow the commitments undertaken have been honoured, despite enormous difficulties. A full printed report is available from the Italian branch. At the time of writing the Austrians are organising special projects with and for Czechoslovakian refugees, and the Germans announce plans to help victims of the recent earthquake in Iran by taking part in a semi-governmental action of several organisations from the BRD.

7. Short-term programme

This is the main work of SCI, but by no means the best organised. Most projects still lack adequate leadership, and the purpose of the work done is not always fully clear or understood. The number of cancellations, non-arrivals and inexperienced volunteers remains very high. There has been a better distribution of nationalities than in the past, but we have hardly had any volunteers from countries such as USSR, DDR, Bulgaria and Rumania. On the other hand, we have had Czechoslovaks in almost every camp. The experiment of social projects and of work-and-study camps is spreading, and showing some potential for future development, while the nature and scope of voluntary service as traditionally understood are being challenged.

8. Medium-term service

This year showed an increase not only in the number of branches / groups involved in MTS, but also the actual number of MTV's. It is to be hoped that this growth will be maintained. Exchanges with non-European countries, however, have been rather scarce. The only six MTV's we received from Asia experienced some travel and organisational complications, but they soon settled down into the programme arranged, and now appear to be profiting from their stay in Europe.

9. Conclusion

In order to have a clear picture of SCI as it stands, we must consider various aspects and fit them all together so that the whole can be seen in the right perspective. This of necessity involves a thorough examination of the work, growth, aims and achievement of the movement. Branches / groups have differing priorities, be it the consolidation of their own organisation and programmes, the promotion of SCI's original aims, or the furtherance of the international character of the movement. There has been an explosion in the activities, numbers of volunteers and of projects. It must never be taken for granted that growth is of necessity good, as this rapid expansion of SCI has resulted in the overloading of the administrative staff, consequent reduction in efficiency, and in the personnel element, with the net result that we now have projects /this applies mainly to short-term service) which are far from successful, where no useful purpose is fulfilled, and where the volunteers themselves are dissatisfied and disillusioned.

Following this line of thought, it can be conceived how a lack of good projects in industrialised countries could well result in an increase in work-study camps. These camps, if properly prepared and organised, could prove of immense value, especially in the sphere of international understanding. It must be remembered that the majority of our volunteers are newcomers to the movement, and that the veteran volunteers are becoming fewer year-by-year.

In the light of all this, surely the coordinating and guiding element for the successful future of SCI lies in its essentially international nature. If we claim to be an international organisation, we must operate on international lines at all levels. We have now reached an important turning-point, and must decide along what precise lines the movement will operate in the future.

- a) Each branch / group should therefore examine and value itself in the role it plays as part of the over-all movement;
- b) Short-term camps should be so organised that they cater for the need of young people, while still furthering the basic aims of SCI.

We cannot solve the problems of society, but we can encourage, through our activities, the study of such problems, and this can best be done by working on quality as opposed to quantity.

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