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Origin, aims et methods

Founded in 1920 by a Swiss engineer, Pierre Ceresole, SCI tries to promote social justice, international understanding and peace by means of practical international voluntary actions, such as:

- Work camps (varying from a weekend to a few weeks);
- Medium and long-term projects (from 3 months to 2 years);
- Emergency relief work;
- Seminars and training courses;
- Special activities in support of conscientious objectors, victims of political repression, minority groups, immigrants;
- Exchange of volunteers with other organizations;
- Setting up of permanent centres for continuous activity in particular fields.

Membership

SCI is based on ordinary individuals who - irrespective of their social status, race, political or religious views - agree with the movement's aims and methods, and support its activities, also financially.

Local groups

These are composed of individual members - wherever possible - so that, together, they can better undertake SCI activities in their area and assist in carrying out international projects.

National branches/groups

These operate with considerable autonomy, having their own policy-making bodies, but they must ensure that any activity carried out in the name of SCI reflects the spirit of the international constitution. National branches take part in decision-making at all levels and they also have an obligation to support the movement financially. A national group may by accorded branch status by the International Committee, depending on its activities and organizational stability.

International Committee (IC)

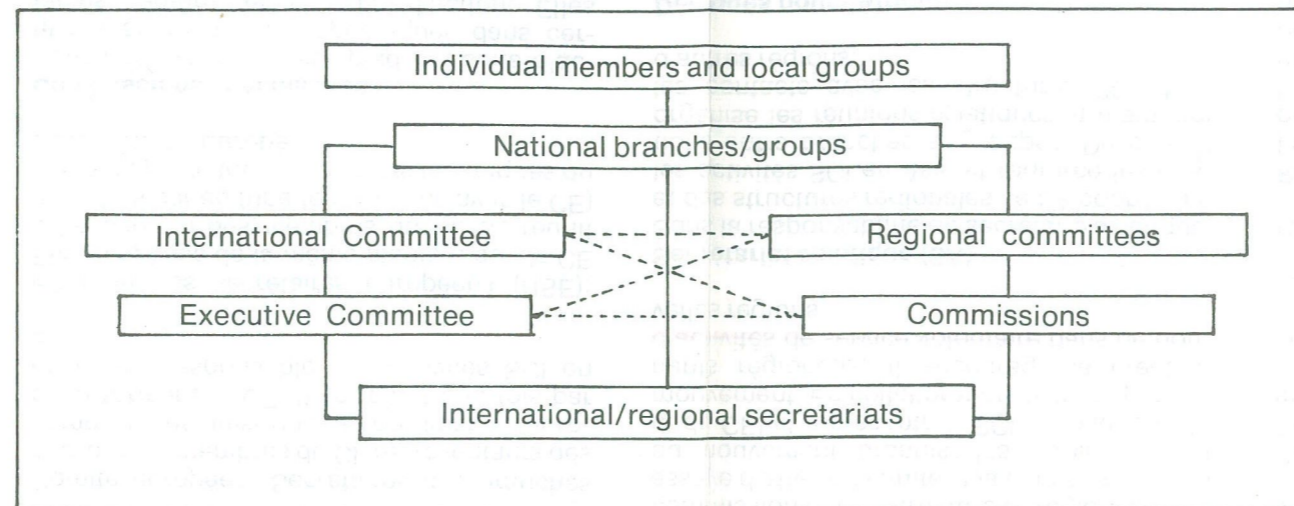
Composed of one delegate from each branch, it is the major policy-making body. Meeting every 2 years, it draws up the movement's general policy lines and takes all necessary steps related to the functioning of the organization. The IC may coopt more members - up to a maximum of half the members of branch delegates - and also elects the International Executive Committee.

International Executive Committee (IEC)

The IEC comprises the SCI president, treasurer, 5 vice-presidents and the international secretary. It meets every 6 months and takes policy decisions during the time between IC meetings. These decisions include the appointment of international SCI staff. Its members are automatically members of the IC.

SERVICE CIVIL INTERNATIONAL

STRUCTURE OF THE MOVEMENT



Regional Committees

Africa Committee - It consists of representatives of those branches involved in work in Africa, a few coopted members and the SCI delegates for Africa. It meets once a year and coordinates activities related to the region, in close cooperation with African bodies.

Asian Regional Committee (ARC) - It is composed of IC members, branch/group secretaries in the region, 3 coopted members, plus the previous and present Asian secretary. It meets once a year and is responsible for all SCI work in Asia.

Asian Executive Committee (AEC) - It consists of the SCI vice-presidents in the area, one coopted member and the Asian secretary. It meets every 6 months and assists the AS for the implementation of ARC decisions.

European Committee Meeting (ECM) - Branch/group secretaries, IC members, commissions' representatives in the region, plus the European coordinator, form the ECM. It meets once a year and is responsible for SCI activities in Europe.

European Secretaries' Meeting (ESM) - It is composed like the ECM, but without the IC members. It meets twice a year (once combined with the ECM) and deals with all technical aspects of SCI work in the region.

Specialized commissions

These are set up according to specific needs and activities in given areas or fields of action. They can be officially recognized only after significant activity has been carried out within the movement. At present the following commissions are operating officially:

- Africa/Asia commission;
- Commission for cooperation with youth movements in socialist countries;
- European immigrants' commission;
- Insurance commission;
- International emergency action commission
- Northern Ireland coordinating committee.

All committees and commissions are ultimately responsible to the International Committee. SCI meetings are open to ordinary members of the movement who may attend as observers.

International Secretariat (IS)

Under the immediate responsibility of the international secretary and assisted by the IEC, the International Secretariat maintains regular contacts with branches/groups, commissions and regional bodies. It tries to ensure unity and cohesion within the movement, organizes the IC and IEC meetings, and represents SCI outside the movement. In cooperation with regional officers it also encourages voluntary service activities in new areas.

Asian Secretariat (AS)

Under the responsibility of the Asian secretary and regional bodies, the AS coordinates SCI activities in Asia and ensures smooth relationships between branches/groups. In addition, it organizes regional meetings and maintains contacts with SCI bodies in other regions.

Africa delegates

In the absence of an African secretariat the SCI delegates for this region are responsible for organizing activities and exchanging volunteers. They work in close cooperation with African organizations.

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European affairs

These are at present dealt with by an assistant for Europe who is based in the International Secretariat. In cooperation with the IS, this person has particular responsibility for coordinating SCI activities, maintaining contacts with branches/groups/commissions in Europe and organizing regional meetings.

Clearing House (CLH)

Under the responsibility of the ECM/ESM, the Clearing House functions from April to September. It carries out all technical matters related to the exchange of short-term volunteers within Europe and North Africa.

Finances

National branches, the IEC and IC, assisted by the IS and regional bodies, are responsible for the international budget which is substantially financed from sources within the movement. Outside funds are accepted providing they do not interfere with the principles and independence of the movement. The IS maintains a current account with each branch/group, is responsible for the international coordination budget and - in association with the relevant bodies - for the regional budgets.

Insurance

SCI runs its own insurance scheme, complementary to any insurance volunteers may have. It covers volunteers and staff members against accident, illness and third party risk during their period of service. For large claims the insurance scheme is reinsured by a commercial insurance company. Premiums are kept as low as possible and are paid annually by branches/groups on the basis of the total number of workdays per volunteer. SCI cooperating organizations may utilize this scheme provided that a specific arrangement is made beforehand with the insurance commission.

Communication and information

In addition to regular news-sheets and special reports produced and distributed internationally to ensure communication and exchange of views within the movement, other publications are also used. These include bulletins, brochures and booklets published by branches and groups.

External relations

SCI cooperates with about 40 other organizations throughout the world, mainly for the purpose of exchanging volunteers. It has consultative status with Unesco, the Council of Europe and is a founder-member of the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service. The International Secretariat is generally responsible for external relations on behalf of the movement and may call on other SCI officers for assistance, whenever necessary.