

PSYCHOLOGY

PCV an American Image

The ability to get along with others, of prime importance in international relationships, is vital to Peace Corpsmen who are in effect ambassadors at large, Watson Davis reports.

► THE MOST IMPORTANT task in the world today is for people to get along with other people without dropping hydrogen bombs upon them or dominating them.

The rise of scores of new nations, out of the empires of old nations, is complicated by the fact that none of us has an iron-clad formula for getting along with other people, although all of us must in personal or national relationships.

The Peace Corps, with the help of the National Institute of Mental Health, has brought experts in human behavior to Washington. Its primary concern is the kind of persons in the Corps to work with other countries throughout the globe.

These young and enthusiastic Peace Corpsmen (PCVs these volunteers call themselves) are just as much representatives of the United States as our ambassadors. Many of them will have more impact upon those in the countries to which they go than the ambassadors and the top-ranking diplomats.

The attitudes of a Peace Corpsman—whether he likes to work with people, whether he believes that people other than Americans are important and useful in the world—will show through in his manner, conveyed, not alone in words, but in expressions, innuendoes and the little facial signals that almost tell what a person is feeling.

There are three types who volunteer: the “givers,” the “getters” and the “philosophizers.” For every five single men applying, there are three single women.

The person who is anxious in stress conditions, and not necessarily the “calm, cool and collected” type, makes a good leader, Dr. Jose Armilla of Theil College, Greenville, Pa., has found.

There is much to be learned about working with other people right here in the United States. The problems abroad are not necessarily more critical or complex but they are of the same kind. In the long run, they may be more important because they may determine whether there is peace or war in the world. They rank in importance with the solution of our relationships here at home.

When our American leaders of a great international program call upon the best brains of behavioral science, it augurs well for U.S.A. success abroad. Every Peace Corpsman of the right effectiveness and attitude will make America less ugly abroad. The qualities needed cannot be created or taught in a few weeks. They must arise out of our parents, homes and schools throughout the land. Recognition of what is needed is a great first step.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Human Survival Most Critical Problem Today

► HUMAN SURVIVAL, the most crucial problem of the atomic world, is the concern of 5,000 scientists who attended the annual sessions of the American Orthopsychiatric Association in Washington, D. C.

The scientists who work with human problems are as worried about the threat of nuclear attack as the rest of us.

Different approaches and solutions to the problem of survival include:

War and peace are human rather than technical problems.

Decision makers need to know how nations behave, how alternative routes to disarmament can be paved, and how international tensions can be reduced.

Leaders will then be able to know in advance where their diplomatic, cultural and scientific programs will lead their nations.

This is a large order for the behavioral scientists to fill. Many have not yet recognized their political responsibilities.

The present international circumstances show that those who work to solve individual human problems are needed to solve the problems of the world.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Prevent World War IV by Scientific Organization

► WORLD WAR III may be finished by the time the scientists get organized, but World War IV can be prevented, Dr. Elton B. McNeil, University of Michigan psychologist, said.

The behavioral scientists are now marshalling their forces for an all-out attack on the problems of war.

Most people, and most politicians, think war is just a matter of bombs and bullets. But war is “a psychological and a human problem,” as well as a technical one, Dr. McNeil told SCIENCE SERVICE.

When the behavioral scientists unite and join forces with the physical scientists, policy makers can be given useful advice. As it is now, they get confusing and conflicting answers to their questions and, in the end, just have to act on their own common sense, Dr. McNeil commented.

War is too dangerous to be left to common sense alone. The test of the worth of the behavioral sciences is the ability to meet “this final crisis,” the race against extinction, Dr. McNeil told the American Orthopsychiatry Association meeting in Washington, D. C.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Overheard Conversation Influences Opinions

► CONVERSATIONS overheard in lounges or restaurants may be more persuasive than propaganda, two psychologists, Drs. Elaine Walster and Leon Festinger of Stanford University, Calif., have found.

It is believed that a communication that is inadvertently overheard by a person has more influence in changing his opinion than if the remark had been addressed directly to him.

Direct persuasion is often ineffective because people feel they are being forced to form an opinion. Overhearing private remarks does not make listeners suspicious and they are likely to believe what they overhear.

The psychologists found that a group of married women who unsuspectingly overheard psychotherapists say that husbands should spend more time at home were persuaded that this was true. The group of married women who knew that the therapists were purposefully trying to influence them did not pay any attention to these comments about their husbands.

The scientists reported their studies in the Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 65: 395, 1962.

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NASA

NEW BOOSTER—The first of the so-called Block II version of the Saturn I booster is being hoisted into the static test stand at the NASA-Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Ala. This fifth flight booster, SA-5, differs in tail design from earlier stages and its propellant capacity has been increased by 100,000 pounds.