

ACTION UPDATE

June 18, 1979



Dick Gregory (center) talks with (1. to r.) Dick Celeste, John Lewis, Sam Brown and Al Raby.

ACTION CONFERENCE STRESSES MINORITY PARTICIPATION

Director Sam Brown has asked officials of more than 70 historically black colleges across the nation for their support in recruiting more minority volunteers for the Peace Corps and VISTA.

The request came at a conference of top ACTION officials and the black college re-

presentatives, May 7-8, at Clark College in Atlanta, Ga. Speaking on behalf of other black colleges, Clark College President Elias Blake called the meeting "a new watershed in terms of our relationship with the federal government."

The colloquium was held to provide the college officials with information about Peace Corps

and VISTA programs today and to encourage their participation in the agency's recruitment and training contracts.

Besides Brown, other top ACTION officials attending the colloquium were new Peace Corps Director Richard F. Celeste, ACTION's Director of Domestic Operations John Lewis, and ACTION's Director of Administration and Finance Mary Leyland.

"I suspect," said Brown, "that no federal agency has ever had four presidential appointees come to tell you what is going on with their programs and to listen to you about what is going on in your communities."

Welcoming the group to Atlanta's Clark College, which hosted the meeting, Blake observed, "One of the things I see as very important is to generate more interest in our schools in international issues."

Noting that college graduates today are "heavily pressed to get on and make money," he said that "young people have to see what kinds of benefits (Peace Corps and VISTA) will bring to them and how people out there will receive young people with these kind of experiences."

The colloquium was coordinated by Dr. Charles Martin, a professor on leave from Howard University and editor-in-chief of the Journal of Negro Education. Martin is a 1978-79 White House Fellow serving as a special assistant to the ACTION director.

In Atlanta, the meeting was organized by Atlanta Service Center Director Jeannette Cason and Area Manager Peter Hubbard. Most of the nation's 105 historically black colleges are located in the southeast, within the service center's recruitment area.



Dr. Charles Martin

Other speakers at the Atlanta meeting included entertainer and social activist Dick Gregory; ACTION's Director of Recruitment and Communications Larry Brown; and Peace Corps Director in the Ivory Coast Alyce Hill.

"I'm here tonight because of brother Dick Celeste," Gregory said in a freewheeling speech that sent the audience roaring with laughter and responding with seriousness as he covered many subjects including the need to speak "honestly" when talking about volunteer service and the benefits Peace Corps or VISTA or ACTION could bring to volunteers and to

historically black institutions.

Gregory said, "When I was running across the country talking about hunger... probably the highest public official who came out to meet us was Dick Celeste who came out and took us to the State House and held a press conference. I look at Dick Celeste and I feel comfortable."

Celeste previously was lieutenant governor of Ohio.

Gregory said, "A lot of things can happen with

the Peace Corps and VISTA and the group of people here ... the problem is that the Peace Corps is structured for white middle class. You're here because it's your turn now.

"It's a new day in America and because of this

students is "to move their horizons in terms of what is possible."

Dr. Patricia Fisher, a former Peace Corps volunteer who now is a professor of psychology at Howard University, added that the Peace Corps



Anne Graves with ACTION recruiters (l. to r.) Bill Magee and Abdul Azeez

day, a lot of things are going to have to happen in the diplomatic world.... There's no better way to get that (experience) than through the Peace Corps."

Gregory's comments on the career value of the Peace Corps and other volunteer service were echoed later during a panel discussion of former Peace Corps and VISTA volunteers and staff.

Reflecting on his experiences as a Peace Corps country deputy director in Ghana and as country director in Uganda, Charles James, now U.S. Ambassador to Niger, said that one of the major values of the Peace Corps to black college

experience "was a very meaningful one in my life.

"I would like to challenge educators who are concerned about the total development of a young person to challenge them to go beyond place, or state or country. The Peace Corps or VISTA experience will not be one they'll ever regret."

Ms. Coumba Ceesay, director of women's cooperatives in The Gambia and a guest at the conference, noted, "The Peace Corps not only is needed in The Gambia but throughout Africa," especially in the fields of health and nutrition.

She said that women's programs were established in rural areas of The Gambia with the assistance of Peace Corps volunteers "but unfortunately, there were no black volunteers."

Karen Gaskins, a Peace Corps recruiter in Washington, D.C., told the group: "I enlisted in the Peace Corps with fairly selfish motives, and I'm proud of it."

A graduate of Atlanta's Spelman College, she entered through a Peace Corps/Teacher Corps program at Texas Southern University and earned credit towards her master's degree in education while serving as a volunteer teacher and math education specialist in Sierra Leone.

"Now I'm a recruiter and I enjoy talking to black students because we need to expand our horizons," she said. "I think each and every one of you can help us to get students to realize how much they can gain from this experience."

Meeting in work sessions, the educators identified problems and offered recommendations on how ACTION can improve its ties to historically black colleges.

Reporting for one group, Anne Graves, director of international student affairs at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, said that one of the major problems has been a lack of visibility for the Peace Corps and VISTA on black campuses and the lack of funds for recruitment of minorities.

As spokesperson for her group, she urged the agency to get more Peace Corps representatives on black campuses; to provide more technical assistance in the contract proposal process and more lead time in the advertising of contracts; more involvement of agency officials in recruitment activities; consideration of the development of consortia - or groups of colleges - that would share a Peace Corps/VISTA representative among their campuses; and that the agency should provide follow-up information to all of the college representatives.



Elias Blake, John Lewis and Sam Brown

ORC Director Larry Brown said that of the 6,500 Peace Corps volunteers, 5.2 percent are minority volunteers, 2.4 percent of them black. Minorities represent 22.1 percent of the 4,000 VISTA volunteers. Of the total, 28 percent of locally recruited VISTA volunteers are minorities, including 17.1 percent black volunteers. About 7.8 percent of nationally recruited VISTA volunteers are minorities, including 4.4 percent black.

Brown said ACTION has established an overall recruitment goal of 20 percent minority volunteers within the next two years.

Brown told the educators that ACTION currently has 60 strategy contracts for Peace Corps recruitment and representation on campuses across the country; more than one third are at minority colleges. Next year, half of the contracts will go to minority colleges.

Brown said that last year the agency awarded about \$148,000 in contracts to minority colleges and businesses. Depending on Congressional authorization for funding, a significant increase will be available next year, he said.

ACTION's Director of Administration and Finance Leyland recommended that the Uni-

PRESIDENT'S ORDER GIVES PEACE CORPS AUTONOMY WITHIN ACTION

President Carter has signed an executive order to retain the Peace Corps within ACTION and, at the same time, constitute it as an autonomous "agency within an agency" having more "vitality, visibility and independence."

Carter said that autonomy within ACTION would strengthen the Peace Corps "while preserving its position as a joint venture with our domestic volunteer service programs within the framework of ACTION."

The President's May 16 executive order supercedes the order issued by President Richard Nixon in 1971 which gave the director of ACTION the authority to direct the Peace Corps. Carter's order turns that authority over to the Peace Corps director.

"...a joint venture with our domestic service programs within the framework of ACTION."

President Carter

Under the President's executive order, the Peace Corps director consults with the ACTION director and coordinates certain Peace Corps activities with those of ACTION. The order also calls for the creation of a Peace Corps Advisory Council of up to 30 members appointed by the President to advise the Administration and the Peace Corps on policies.

Peace Corps Director Richard F. Celeste said he welcomed the executive order that he said would allow him to fulfill the duties that are ex-

pected of him from the President, Congress and ACTION Director Sam Brown.

Senior staff testifies on Hill in support of order.

On May 17, Celeste and Brown, Deputy Director Mary E. King and Domestic Operations Director John Lewis appeared before the Senate Government Affairs Committee to testify in support of the executive order.

Celeste said he saw a "great deal of merit" in linking Peace Corps with VISTA, ACTION's domestic volunteer program, which is committed to help low-income people improve their conditions in many of the same ways in which Peace Corps does overseas.

"There are many groups in the Third World that are the equivalent to VISTA," Celeste told the committee. "We ought to be working with them. Linking Peace Corps and VISTA together seems to me a logical way to accomplish this goal and meet the Third World desire for increased reciprocity."

"We need to build a Peace Corps characterized by shoulder-to-shoulder efforts with domestic volunteer programs around the world and we need to draw on that experience in this country as well," Celeste said.

Brown said that Peace Corps autonomy should be achieved without costing additional money. "Those administrative functions that can be shared will be," said Brown who listed examples of computerized payroll and volunteer record

keeping, fiscal and accounting services, public affairs and recruitment.

"I want to stress very strongly that the President's decision will give the Peace Corps greater autonomy without breaking the vital link the Peace Corps now has with our domestic programs," Brown said.

The Peace Corps director will direct and control the operations of the Peace Corps while the director of ACTION will be in charge of support functions that jointly serve ACTION and Peace Corps volunteer programs.

"Peace Corps should remain within ACTION and be constituted there as an autonomous operating entity."

President Carter

The order also continues the designation of ACTION as the principal agency within the Federal Government for administering volunteer service programs and delegates to the ACTION Director the responsibility for coordinating volunteer programs under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, the Peace Corps Act and other Federal acts authorizing volunteer service programs.

In her May 17 testimony King said that the President's decision "to strengthen ACTION's role as a central volunteer agency makes logical sense. There are more than six million voluntary organizations in this sector of our national life. These nongovernmental organizations and associations play a fundamental and continuing role in our society and overseas," King said.

Celeste and Brown will agree, within 30 days, on plans to carry out the reorganization under the following principles:

ACTION will continue to be the principal agency within the Federal Government for administering volunteer service programs.

The Peace Corps Director will establish and control a separate budget, subject only to ACTION policy guidance, regarding coordination of domestic programs.

The President defined support functions as those which could be carried out "in the interests of economy, efficiency and good management." He said that the transfer of functions from ACTION to Peace Corps would be carried out with a minimum of disruption to programs and employees.

Celeste said the executive order would give him "the running room and the leverage" he would need to run the Peace Corps in the 1980s and at the same time be able to link up Peace Corps volunteer programs with the domestic volunteer programs of ACTION.

The President's order follows his own letter to Congressional leaders in April stating that "Peace Corps should remain within ACTION and be constituted there as an autonomous operating entity."

The President's letter came shortly after a House vote to transfer the Peace Corps to the proposed International Development Cooperation Agency (IDCA), or establish it as a separate agency if IDCA is not created.

In his letter, Carter said he was reluctant to reverse a precedent established by President Kennedy that the overseas functions of the Peace Corps should not be directly linked with other U.S. overseas operations. "As Congress

long ago realized, the Peace Corps is more than development assistance," Carter said.

Celeste has voiced similar opposition to transferring Peace Corps to an agency like IDCA. "I would raise some serious questions as to what the Peace Corps' linkage would be with an agency that does not even exist yet," he said.

During his testimony before the Senate Government Affairs Committee, Celeste said: "I believe that the transfer of the Peace Corps to the proposed IDCA might, in years to come, jeopardize our past efforts to make the Peace Corps strictly a people-to-people rather than a government-to-government program."

Brown said that employees at all levels would take part in the 30-day consultative process. In a letter to all ACTION staff, Brown said each employee would have the opportunity to provide ideas for consideration during the process to determine the support needs of each ACTION program, particularly Peace Corps needs as it becomes more autonomous within ACTION.

Brown said he, Mary King, Richard Celeste and John Lewis are "committed to ensuring that support functions will emerge improved, the programs will be strengthened, and employees will be secure in the workplace."

The process provides for functional work groups to immediately begin reviewing materials, suggestions, past studies, investigations and other information submitted by staff during this period.

Coordination of the process is being carried out by Jim Duke, the agency executive officer, with the assistance of a coordination committee.

Employees take part in consultative process.

Final decisions will be made by Brown and Celeste. The agreements and implementation plan will be forwarded to the President no later than June 22.

Employees Recommend Ways to Carry Out Order

In the 30 days following May 17, the agency, in close consultation with the union (AFSCME), is examining the impact of the President's executive order on each functional area within the agency, and on the employees who perform those functions. A major consideration is the President's directive that any changes must minimize program and employee disruption.

Employees were encouraged to present ideas, suggestions and comments during the decision-making process. The issues and options developed by employees in work units (branches, divisions, offices) were submitted on May 30

to one or more of eight functional work groups. The next step of the review process provided for these work groups to begin discussion of employee recommendations on May 31. The functional work groups were broken down into the following categories: Administrative Services; Personnel; Staff Training/Equal Opportunity; Evaluation/Paperwork and Automation; Congressional and Public Awareness; Budget, Planning and Accounting; Recruitment/Placement and Health; and Legal/Contracts and Grants and Investigation and Inspections.

Once the work groups presented their final reports, the first level review was made by a pro-

VISTA VOLUNTEERS AID DISASTER VICTIMS



Spring arrived with a vengeance in many parts of the United States, as tornados and floods caused death and personal injury and brought about destruction calculated in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

A tornado in Texas and floods in Alabama, Mississippi and Minnesota mobilized hundreds of RSVP and VISTA volunteers throughout those states. In response to requests from the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration (FDAA), ACTION volunteers and staff began working in the affected communities through Disaster Assistance Centers, along with such agencies as the Red Cross, the Small Business Administration, the Community Services Administration, HUD and the Internal Revenue Service.

ACTION volunteers, some working up to twelve hours a day, were involved in intake processing, helping victims complete forms for relief assist-

ance, referring them to appropriate agencies and, in many cases, assisting in clean-up operations and debris removal.

The tornado which struck Wichita Falls, Texas, on April 10 brought 11 VISTA volunteers—two from Oklahoma City and nine from Dallas—to this prairie city of 200,000. The death count stands at 50 and the injured at over 500, while the property damage is estimated at \$300 million.

According to VISTA Kevin Wetter, these figures don't begin to reflect the personal agonies of people who have lost everything. "The devastation was unreal!" he said. "It's hard to describe. You'd have to see it to believe it."

Wetter, 24, originally from Natrona Heights, Pa., was one of the nine VISTA volunteers who traveled from Dallas to assist in the disaster and rescue efforts. "Although we were pre-

pared to do anything we were asked," he explained, "we were assigned to staff two Disaster Assistance Centers in town." The volunteers, all assigned to community organizing projects, used their interview skills in assisting persons in filling out necessary forms, referring them to other agencies, answering telephone inquiries and canvassing the town, passing out informational leaflets.

Chris Beyer, 23, a VISTA volunteer with the Bois d'Arc Patriots community organizing project in Dallas, also worked at one of the disaster centers. "I personally talked with hundreds of the more than 20,000 homeless victims," she said. "I heard their first-hand

stories of terror.. of people being locked in closets, seeing their family members being blown away. But I wasn't prepared for the incredible strength and composure most of these people demonstrated."

"The courage and humor of the people of Wichita Falls is incredible," agreed Wetter. "There is a tremendous sense of unity and a desire to rebuild. In fact, the Chamber of Commerce had bumper stickers made up which said: 'Wichita Falls is Coming Back Strong and Fast' ... and I believe it will," he said. "Yes," noted Chris Beyers, "I'd like to go back in about six months and see what they've done."

Employees' Recommendations

(from pg. 7)

gram committee made up of representatives from OAVP, OVCP, VISTA, Peace Corps, Domestic Operations and the union. The final recommendations were presented to the General Counsel's Office by June 8.

The results of General Counsel's review were submitted to the agency's Executive Staff

(excluding Sam Brown and Dick Celeste) by June 14. The Executive Staff's recommendations will be submitted to the union for independent review. The union will submit comments to Sam Brown and Dick Celeste by June 18. The agreements and the implementation plan will be forwarded to the President no later than June 22.

ACTION Conference

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versity officials contact ACTION contracts and grants officers in each state office for information and assistance.

"I hear a healthy tone of 'show-me,'" said Celeste. "Who is responsible?" he asked. "I guess I'm here at the end because I feel responsible.

"I hear a concern about information and com-

munication. Some of what we're talking about may require institutional changes."

The key will be "the relationship we build and sustain over the months and years ahead." Celeste said. "There is a West African saying that the bird builds her nest little by little. We have to make the changes that have that kind of endurance."

MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS TAKE EEO TRAINING

All ACTION managers and supervisors are taking a one-day training course in "Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Roles and Responsibilities for Managers and Supervisors."

According to Staff Training and Development Director Bob McClendon, all headquarters managers and supervisors will have taken the EEO policy training by June 15, 1979.

Participants are instructed in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in employment; the EEO Act of 1972, which prohibits discrimination in all aspects of personnel management; cross cultural understanding; federal agency requirements regarding equal employment; affirmative action planning; and special emphasis programs—Upward Mobility, Hispanic employment, and federal women's employment.

Plans are under way for training in ACTION's domestic field offices. That training should be completed by Oct. 1, 1979. In addition, all supervisors must take EEO training within a year after assuming their positions.

The training is part of ACTION's FY 79 Equal Employment Opportunity Plan to study and improve minority employment practices. It was ordered by Raul Rodriguez of the Office of Compliance as part of a settlement stipulation of a suit against ACTION, challenging certain agency employment practices as racially discriminatory.

Originally known as "Garnes, et al. vs. Balzano," and later changed to "Garnes, et al. vs. Brown," the suit was filed three years ago in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on behalf of eight black employees, all of whom

were at the GS-9 or equivalent grade level and below.

The suit was later expanded, as a class action suit, to include all blacks employed at ACTION any time between March 1976 and Feb. 7, 1979, the submission and settlement acceptance dates respectively.

Although ACTION denied the allegations, and no discrimination was actually proved, it voluntarily entered into this settlement, "in order to reaffirm its policy of employing, utilizing and promoting the best qualified individuals possible without regard to sex, race, religion or national origin, and as part of an effort to respond to allegations that certain minorities have not been fairly treated in ACTION's workforce in the past," said District Court Judge Thomas A. Flannery, who heard the case.

As part of the settlement, ACTION also agreed to make additional efforts to recruit and offer employment to qualified minority and female applicants and to insure that all employees would receive the types of assignments and responsibility required for promotion.

In keeping with the above efforts, the agency has hired a consultant to analyze agency recruitment, selection and promotion procedures at the GS-9 and equivalent grade level and below, and to obtain suggestions for improvement from departing minority and female employees. The consultant will present a report to Rodriguez within six months with recommendations for improvement.

Rodriguez will present a report in March of 1980 and 1981 on the number of ACTION promotions and separations by race, sex, office, region and occupation.

An Interview with Dick Celeste

On May 23, Vice President Walter Mondale administered the oath of office to Peace Corps Director Richard Celeste. President Carter's nomination of Celeste had been confirmed by the U.S. Senate on April 25. One of Celeste's first actions as the new director was to share his views with editors of the ACTION publications, Peace Corps Times, Reconnection and ACTION Update. Following are some of the editors' questions and Celeste's replies. More complete reports of that interview will appear in upcoming editions of Reconnection and Peace Corps Times.

ACTION—Some volunteers in the field have seen two Peace Corps directors come and go. How do you think these departures affect the volunteers' confidence in the Peace Corps?

CELESTE—I spent four years in India. From my own experience, I would say that such events have less impact on those in the field than we who sit here in Washington would like to think. In the long haul, I think that one of the strengths of the Peace Corps is that it can endure changes. But I also believe that quality and continuity of leadership for the Peace Corps really is important in that regard. I would like to provide some strength and coherence of leadership for however long I may be the head of the Peace Corps.

ACTION—Some critics have pointed out that the Peace Corps has a larger staff now than when there were twice as many volunteers. What are your views on this?

CELESTE—I do not want to make a judgment on numbers because I know there was a time when the numbers on the staff seemed low. But that was a time when Peace Corps was contracting many of its services out. There was a time,

for example, when all trainers and evaluators were on contract. So let's not judge our success on a staff-volunteer ratio but rather on the strength of programs, on the ability to provide real challenges and to identify appropriate areas of innovation, because being innovative is what the Peace Corps is all about.

ACTION—Ex-Peace Corps volunteers number about 85,000 now. Do you see ways that these ex-volunteers can be helpful to the Peace Corps?

CELESTE—Returning Peace Corps volunteers will always be our best recruiters. They will be especially important as we make efforts to recruit more minority volunteers—blacks, Hispanics and others. The returning volunteers can go out and talk first-hand about their experiences. I would like Peace Corps to be in touch with virtually all of the ex-volunteers. Not only would I like to enlist their support, but I would like to hear their criticisms as well.

ACTION—There are some members of Congress who would like to see Peace Corps removed from ACTION and made independent, arguing that such a move would shield Peace Corps from bureaucracy and politics. What are your views?

CELESTE—First of all, independence is a relative notion. Historically, Peace Corps has never been completely independent. Although the Peace Corps has stood at arms length, it has always had a relationship with some agency in the federal government. Therefore, the issue is not independence but whether or not it is fulfilling the mandate that has been put in its hands. Does



it have the vision it needs to make it a vital and growing force in the future? Peace Corps is not a partisan enterprise. Our appropriations will continue to be generated through a political process in which we have to address members of both parties in Congress to justify the resources that have been put in our hands.

ACTION—Then how do you feel about the proposed House bill that would remove Peace Corps from ACTION and transfer it to the proposed International Development Cooperation Administration (IDCA)?

CELESTE—In the Peace Corps you cannot separate people-to-people programs from development programs. They go hand-in-hand. Without people-to-people programs we become just a bunch of junior development technicians. Frankly, that is why I am concerned about Peace Corps becoming a part of IDCA. I think creating something like IDCA makes very good sense.

But I don't think it makes good sense for the Peace Corps to become part of IDCA. Inevitably there would be pressures overseas from people in AID (Agency for International Development) missions to view Peace Corps volunteers as implementers of AID programs and AID priorities.

ACTION—You recently made a comment that unless the Peace Corps changes to reflect the world of the coming 1980s, it should not exist. What changes do you have in mind?

CELESTE—I don't have a secret agenda for the Peace Corps in the 1980s. But I know we had better address ourselves to the 1980s if we want to justify our continued existence. I want volunteers, returning volunteers and staff to help me define that agenda. We were not created to be a part of the U.S. Government for all time. We were created because there is a particular motivation in this country that is relevant to addressing the needs of the poorest majority in the world.

ACTION—Regarding that majority, how much do you think that their needs have changed in the past decade?

CELESTE—The basic needs that we talk about now are not all that different from those needs embodied in rural community development in the 1960s. What has changed are the concerns of Third World leaders. The strategies for development in many of these countries are changing virtually every day. The shape of global interests and global expectations is changing. Regarding these changes, the Peace Corps has to find ways within its resources and consistent within its tradition to work side-by-side with volunteers of these Third World nations. How we do that is something I expect the Peace Corps staff overseas and in Washington to be involved in. The fact that we take pride in not being a bureaucracy and that the American people have higher expectations of us than virtually any other U.S. government program is what should prevent the Peace Corps from ever getting stale.

Staff Spotlight: Ophelia Speight



Ophelia Speight knows what it's like to be a volunteer and that's why she wants to see more minorities join VISTA and the Peace Corps.

A former VISTA volunteer in Missouri, she recently was named a special assistant for minority recruitment at ACTION.

"VISTA gave me a great deal of growth," said Ms. Speight, 26, a 1974 graduate in international politics from the University of North Carolina. "VISTA helped me to see who I am and to realize there is more to life than just living for myself."

Joining VISTA in 1974 took her to Kirksville, Mo., where she helped expand Missouri's Older Adults Transportation Service, a subscription minibus service for rural senior citizens. Then she moved on to Kansas City where she worked with the Mid-Continental Council of Girl Scouts, opening programs for young girls in the city's public housing projects.

Her final VISTA assignment was with SAC-20, a Kansas City community revitalization program that encompasses tutoring and counseling of inner city youth.

In 1975, she began graduate studies with the National Graduate University in Washington, D.C. and became a University Year for ACTION volunteer management intern with Joint Action in Community Service (JACS), a nationwide organization that draws on 6,000 volunteers who offer counseling and other support services to young men as they leave the Job Corps.

"I did that for nine months and then I became an employee of JACS, serving as a liaison between the organization and the public," explained Ms. Speight. "We wanted to build public awareness of the program, and I spent a lot of time talking with businesses and community groups so we could exchange services and get companies to adopt JACS as their community agency."

In her new job at ACTION, Ms. Speight said that she will spend a great deal of time meeting with university students, faculty and career counselors and with community groups, attempting to make them aware of the volunteer opportunities that are available through VISTA and the Peace Corps.

Across the country, Ms. Speight said she also hopes to receive the assistance of other former VISTA and Peace Corps volunteers who are minorities. These former volunteers will be helping out by speaking to local groups and by distributing volunteer applications to their friends.

"So far, 430 former volunteers have joined Minorities in ACTION, a new national association of former minority volunteers that will be setting up local and regional groups," she said. "We would like to get many more former volunteers involved. The organization will assist recruitment but it also will be oriented toward community service.

"It is unfortunate that ACTION has to have a minority specialist," observed Ms. Speight. "But it reflects the commitment of the agency to really increase minority participation."

Only 5.2 percent of the 6,500 Peace Corps volunteers are minorities. The figures for VISTA indicate that 28 percent of volunteers recruited locally are minorities, but only 7.8 percent of those recruited nationally are minorities. Nearly half of the 4,000 VISTAs are nationally recruited for assignments in other sections of the country.

Ms. Speight said ACTION's goal is to achieve 20 percent minority enrollment in the Peace Corps and VISTA by the end of 1982.

"In the coming year, it will be my job to see that plans in the field for minority recruitment are not just on paper," she said. "I'm going to be going to historic black colleges and to cities where there is a large Hispanic population to talk with potential volunteers and to reach an

understanding that Peace Corps and VISTA is for them, too."

Ms. Speight said she believes increasing minority recruitment is important "because it will indicate to host countries as well as to organizations in this country that there are blacks and Hispanics who are just as willing to give of themselves as their white counterparts. And we have to prove to the minority population that Peace Corps and VISTA are not just for the white middle class."

According to Ms. Speight, this summer the Peace Corps is seeking nearly 2,000 volunteers who have a skill and are willing to spend two years in developing a country.

VISTA, said Ms. Speight, anticipates openings for 1,300 volunteers next fall. VISTA looks for men and women over the age of 18, of all backgrounds, who are interested in working in community services programs in their own communities or in other parts of the United States.

Former Peace Corps and VISTA volunteers who would like to contact the Minorities in ACTION Steering Committee may write to Dennis Bethea, 1415 Rhode Island Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Women's Softball in Full Swing

ACTION's women's softball team's 1979 season is underway with games played every Thursday evening at 23rd St. and Constitution Ave., N.W. near the Lincoln Memorial. A game schedule will be posted in each of the three Headquarters buildings.

The team placed first last year in the class B division of the District of Columbia Recreation Association and in the State Department League.

Those interested in playing should contact Leo Clarke at ext. 48375.

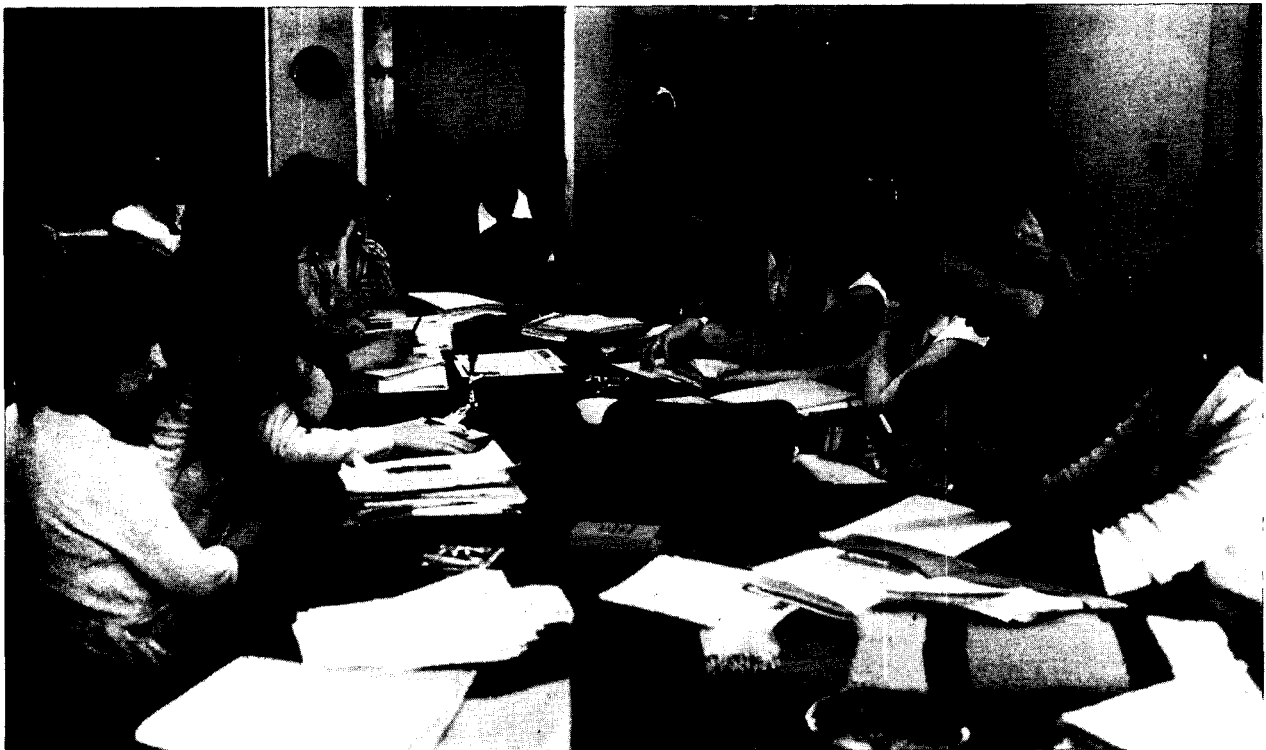
VOLUNTEERS EXCHANGE IDEAS, CONCERNS AT VISTA FORUM

The seventh VISTA forum, held April 30 - May 4 at ACTION Headquarters, presented VISTA volunteer representatives from all over the country an opportunity to discuss their concerns and make recommendations for improved terms of service to VISTA Director Marge Tabankin.

Twenty volunteers elected by state volunteer representatives in each of ACTION's ten regions attended the bi-annual forum. Each of them brought different sets of concerns from their regions.

Here are some of the major recommendations on which forum representatives concurred:

- Improved terms of service for low-income volunteers to increase minority participation in VISTA, including child care services and better career development benefits.
- Increases in the VISTA food and living allowance of volunteers who started service after March 1 to make up for their loss of full food stamp privileges. Representatives recommended pursuing negotiations with the Department of Agriculture to reinstate the food stamp privileges for all volunteers.



Marge Tabankin addresses VISTA forum.

- More complete job descriptions for prospective volunteers.
- A nationwide survey of volunteer transportation needs.
- Transmittal of the forum minutes to all regional and state VISTA representatives.
- Changes in the Memorandum of Agreement between VISTA sponsors and ACTION to guarantee VISTA participation in the forum, transportation support, emergency funds and "fair and just" treatment in volunteer grievances and termination procedures. The regional represent-

atives also asked to be notified by state offices within 24 hours of any termination in order to interview the volunteer.

Tabankin said she would carefully review the forum recommendations and issue a report concerning their feasibility. She stressed that budget restrictions would be a major factor in implementation.

Congressional action on the proposed FY 79 supplemental request is still pending, and the final outcome will directly influence decisions on several proposals, particularly food stamp privileges and child care services.

Sam Brown Speaks to Former PCVs

Director Sam Brown recently told a group of former Peace Corps volunteers that the work of Peace Corps volunteers is "the best thing the United States does abroad."

Brown made the statement in Los Angeles at a reception sponsored in his honor by the Peace Corps Service Council, an organization of former Peace Corps volunteers who live in Southern California.

Brown responded to a broad range of questions from his audience covering the future of the Peace Corps, expansion of minority involvement efforts, the then still-pending appointment of a Peace Corps director and expansion of Peace Corps programs into new countries.

Brown described Peace Corps expansion as the "good news," but categorized recent widely publicized controversies as "political attacks on the agency." Brown emphasized his commitment to ACTION programs as a reflection of "the best of what I believed in for fifteen years."



Sam Brown and Peace Corps Service Council President Hal Huffer view proclamation.

The ACTION director received a proclamation from Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley which lauded the contributions of Peace Corps and VISTA volunteers. Bradley recently returned from a trip to African nations where he met Peace Corps volunteers. He said he was impressed with the scope of ages and cultural backgrounds of the volunteers, and the responses of host countries to Peace Corps programs.

Before leaving California for Washington, D.C., Brown visited a San Diego-based VISTA advocacy program for the community where all of the volunteers are disabled.