

ACTION

November 14, 1980

update...

Brown Addresses Minority Media Group



President of the Capital Press Club, Dwight Ellis and ACTION Director Sam Brown chat with press club members.

ACTION/PC Awareness in Minority Communities Discussed

In an effort to increase ACTION and Peace Corps awareness in the black media, members of the Capital Press Club were invited to ACTION headquarters for an informal meeting and question-and-answer session with Director Sam Brown.

The Capital Press Club is the nation's oldest and largest predominately black organization of media professionals. Founded in 1944, its members work on newspapers, wire services, magazines, radio, TV, films, public relations, information and in related areas.

Sam Brown made a presentation of all ACTION programs and the Peace Corps. He spoke of the re-emphasis on capacity-building through self-help opportunities. "Although the war on poverty began with a focus on self-help," said Brown, "the intervening years seemed to concentrate on 'service to the poor.' That's not what we're all about, nor should we be. In order to instill a sense of pride and value into poor communities, volunteers are now providing a supportive environment for self-reliance."

Brown emphasized that the philosophy of working *with*, rather than *for* was true of Peace Corps as well as VISTA and the Older American Programs.

Delores Davis of the National Black Caucus on the Aged, asked about ACTION's affirmative action policy, and was told by Brown that in terms of volunteers, VISTA has a 30 percent representation of minorities. However, because of the diffi-

culty of recruiting minorities into Peace Corps, they account for slightly less than seven percent of the volunteer force. "That's part of what we are trying to do here today," he said, "to increase the visibility of ACTION and Peace Corps in minority communities through people like yourselves."

In terms of staff, Brown said that the representation of minorities and women is high at the upper levels of the agency, as well as in the lower grades, "but in the middle levels, I believe we do not have enough blacks, Hispanics or Asian Americans. This has to do a great deal with federal hiring practices—the federal register and the Civil Service System."

Dwight Ellis, president of the Press Club, and also vice-president for Minorities and Special Services at the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington, D.C., inquired as to the increase in the number of 8A (minority) contracts over the years. He was told that these contracts have been increased by 80 percent over the last three years, and "this is a record we can all be proud of."

Several participants stated that there has not been enough media coverage of ACTION/PC in minority communities. Brown agreed and asked for their assistance in accomplishing this. "We have enlarged our press release mailing list to minority publications, and continue to include minorities in PSA radio and TV spots as well as in recruiting brochures. But, as I said earlier, it's not an accident that you are here today. We need the help of the minority media to get the word out."

COPE

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COPE Counseling Center
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1980-1990: U.N. Water Decade

*Safe drinking water/
sanitation is decade's goal*



Diseases related to unsanitary water supplies are responsible for 80 percent of the illnesses in the world today and 50 percent of the deaths of infants and children. Hundreds of millions of people suffer from a number of such diseases – gastroenteritis, malaria and others.

Over half the people in the developing world have no access to a safe, adequate water supply. An even greater percentage lacks adequate sanitation facilities. The tragedy is that much of the technology and know-how for safe, sufficient water and sanitation is relatively simple and inexpensive.

In response to this situation – which takes an enormous toll in the energy and work capacity of the world's people – the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, in 1976 suggested an International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade with the goal of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation to all the people of the world by 1990. This decade was endorsed by the United Nations Water Conference in Mar del Plata, Argentina in 1977 and the World Health Organization/ United Nations Children's Fund (WHO/ UNICEF) International Conference on Primary Health Care, held two years ago in the Soviet Union.

The decade was officially launched on November 10, 1980 with a special day-long session of the U.N. General Assembly. Speakers included U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim and the Executive Heads of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Development Co-operation Agency, WHO and UNICEF. Member state representatives addressed the assembly on decade goals and national and international plans, and the decade theme film, "Journey for Survival," was shown.

According to Craig Hafner, water and sanitation specialist in Peace Corps' Office of Program and Training Coordination, who attended the U.N.

events, U.N. representatives in each developing country are beginning the decade by forming National Action Committees which focus on such activities as health education, community participation and training of mid-level technicians. Various groups – financial institutions, non-government organizations, schools and colleges, business, industrial and community groups, and the media are participating.

U.N. representatives are also forming support teams, bringing together technical experts from various U.N. agencies to help countries identify and establish decade programs and projects.

"The most important thing Peace Corps has to offer the Water Decade is the articulation of what we have learned from 20 years of experience in grass roots development," Hafner says. "That is that sanitation and water supply problems are complex and closely related to other development problems."

In response to the Water Decade, Peace Corps is developing skill training which involves health education, community organization, and the building and designing of appropriate water and sanitation facilities. "Effective community participation is essential if water and sanitation projects are to be maintained and have an enduring usefulness," Hafner says.

Peace Corps will stress intra-and inter-regional networking through increased collaborative efforts with other developing agencies, including the Agency for International Development, UNICEF, the World Bank and private voluntary agencies, "all of which have considerable experience in the field of water and sanitation."

An example of this kind of effort is the assignment of PCVs to a latrine construction/health education project in Oman, designed by WHO in response to the Water Decade. "It is the sort of teamwork we'll need," Hafner says, "if the goals of the Water Decade are to be achieved."

Credit Union Begun by VISTAs Receives Loan

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Eastern Suffolk Rural Development Credit Union, started and supported by VISTA volunteers in Riverhead, N.Y., is one of 33 low-income community development credit unions across the country chosen by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) and the Community Services Administration (CSA) to receive a \$200,000 five-year, low-interest loan from CSA and technical assistance from NCUA.

About 200 out of approximately 650 low-income community credit unions in the United States applied for the loans, which are being awarded on the basis of their response to the needs and development of low-income people in their communities as well as their financial stability.

The Eastern Suffolk Rural Development Credit Union was established with the help of VISTA volunteers in 1974 by a group of former migrant farmworkers who had settled in the area. In the past six years it has grown from 13 to 1,000 members.

"VISTA volunteers developed the credit union from chartering to break-even point this year. The only support we have ever had has come from VISTA," says Van Dyke Johnson, president of the Long Island credit union. "Most of the volunteers have been former migrants themselves and part of the community. Unlike regular paid employees, they are not 9 to 5'ers. They come with a lot of commitment to serve their people and put in 16-hour days."

The membership of the credit union consists largely of former migrant farmworkers and Shinnecock Indians. They are, for the most part, low-income people who voiced a need for a financial institution of their own to provide a broad range of services.

"One big reason why limited income people stay poor is that, without their own banking facility, they have no way to trap the dollars that flow through their community and use them for their own development," explains Johnson. "When they put their money in a regular bank, it can go to Westhampton to build castles on the beach.

"They need an economic structure to conserve their dollars and recirculate them back into the community in the form of loans for housing and small business development," he continues. "Limited income people also need special services to survive and make the most out of their dollar."

The credit union provides financial counseling, senior citizens' tax assistance and a debt intervention service which extends low-interest loans to cover outstanding debts and attempts to negotiate reasonable terms with creditors. The credit union also helps people obtain food stamps.

Last year, according to Johnson, the credit union was able to funnel \$360,000 back into the community for its growth and development. "People didn't have to go begging for money from loan sharks and financial companies which prey on victims of poverty. Moreover, they saved plenty by not having to shell out high interest payments on their loans," he notes.

"Having their own credit union fosters togetherness and self-reliance in the community. It gives people a real feeling that they are in a position to manage their own affairs and assist in developing their own institutions. There is a dignity involved in that they come to us, not to beg, but to get something they are entitled to, and they pay it back," says Johnson, pointing out that the union has a five percent delinquency rate, one of the lowest of any credit union in the country.

Peace Corps Advisory Council Revived

After a ten-year hiatus, and as a result of the ongoing implementation of Peace Corps autonomy, the Peace Corps Advisory Council was re-appointed by President Carter on October 6.

The Council was first established by the act of Congress which created the agency in 1961, and existed until 1971 when Peace Corps was merged with VISTA and other voluntary agencies into ACTION.

Its purpose now, as earlier, is to advise the President and the director of Peace Corps on ways to help the agency more effectively meet its three legislative goals – providing trained workers for developing nations, helping Third World citizens better understand Americans, and giving Americans a better understanding of the Third World.

PC Director Richard Celeste said, "I will look to the Council in the next year to help us build greater public awareness, both of Peace Corps programs and the needs and aspirations of Third World

peoples, as well as to recruit volunteers who reflect the diversity of our society as we move Peace Corps into the 1980s."

The new Council is composed of 29 Americans – including six returned volunteers – who are distinguished in the fields of international development, education, community and social service, private enterprise and communications. It is co-chaired by Carol Bellamy, President of the New York City Council and a former volunteer in Guatemala, and Terry Herndon, Executive Director of the National Education Association.

Among the Council members are Lillian Carter, mother of the President and a former PCV in India; Muhammad Ali, former world heavyweight boxing champion; Andrew Young, former ambassador to the U.N.; and Yolanda King, actress and daughter of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Council members were sworn in at the first meeting, held October 29 in Washington, D.C., and also attended by Celeste and PC Deputy Director William Sykes. The meeting addressed some major issues, including PC accomplishments and sources of support, activities on which the Council could help, and the Council's role in upcoming PC 20th anniversary activities.

Richard Celeste Swears in Council Members



Kennedy's Children, The Peace Corps 1961-3

By Gerard T. Rice, Ph.D. - 1980

Reviewed by Don Romine

The reviewer presently works in the Office of Policy and Planning as a program analysis officer. Romine came to Peace Corps in May of 1961--shortly after it was created--as administrative assistant to Bill Moyers, then associate director for Public Affairs. He worked overseas as associate director for management in Ethiopia in 1963, and subsequently as head of the Northern Regional Office of Ethiopia.

Returning to the U.S., Romine worked in Peace Corps' Africa Region, the Office of Administration and Finance, and the Office of Volunteer Placement (the present ORC). Since the creation of ACTION, he has held a number of positions in ORC, A&F and OPP.

Several copies of Rice's book are available to be checked out through the ACTION library-M-407.

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President Kennedy addressed the Peace Corps staff during the latter part of 1961. It was a memorable meeting of light-hearted banter and excitement. In a reference to Sargent Shriver, the President said "I do not think it is altogether fair to say that I handed Sarge a lemon from which he made lemonade, but I do think that he was handed and you (the Peace Corps staff) were handed one of the most sensitive and difficult assignments which any administrative group in Washington has been given almost in this century." The Detroit Free Press stated a few months later "Because the President is entitled to a honeymoon, the screwball theory of the Peace Corps was given a hearing by Congress....Today, less than nine months after the first recruit sailed, the Peace Corps is a roaring success."

Kennedy's Children, The Peace Corps 1961-3,

by Gerard T. Rice, is a chronological, anecdotal, and judgmental documentation of how the Peace Corps passed from what some called a screwball theory to a roaring success in 1962, to an agency that is alive and well twenty years later, and one which continues to feed on the concept on which it was founded.

Gerry's thesis is the only documentation of its kind on the history of the Peace Corps. His research took him from the Denis Brogan Center for American Studies in Glasgow, to the Kennedy Library in Boston, and the Johnson Library in Texas. Gerry spent endless hours in the Peace Corps archives in Washington as well as an incredible amount of time interviewing the staff members of the Kennedy White House and the original Peace Corps staff.

Gerry left no stone untouched and no myth unexplored. He has researched in great detail the precedents of the Peace Corps, its establishment, battle for independence, assault on the Hill and the anti-bureaucratic bureaucracy. He has documented and analyzed the recruitment, training and selection of a group of young Americans who built an image that continues to live on.

During his research Gerry became the Peace Corps at heart. He was consumed by the concept, the idealism, the motivation and dedication that made the Peace Corps the roaring success it became in 1961 and whose birthday we celebrate today.

This book is must reading for all those who have been a part of it during the past twenty years. It is so accurate and so captures that special glue that binds us together that I felt as though I had been caught in a time warp and was reliving two years of my life that had been stored as pleasant memories.



ACTION Region X Director Ilona Hancock presents ACTION grant to Arlyce Currie (left) and Sharon Mosely.

Fight for Children's Housing Rights Aided by ACTION Grant

The Housing Rights for Children Project (HRCP) in Oakland, Calif., has been awarded honorable mention in a nationwide competition sponsored by the American Planning Association.

Last year, HRCP, through an ACTION grant, expanded its fight against housing discrimination to families with children through a volunteer program.

According to Sharon Mosely, attorney-at-law for HRCP, the award recognized the project's practical "demonstration of innovative solutions to theoretical needs of women in the urban environment."

ACTION's Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation awarded the \$24,000 grant - to run from Sept. 30, 1979 through Sept. 29, 1980 - to the Bananas organization, a child care information and referral collective in the East Bay area. The Housing Rights for Children Project is Bananas' housing component.

"The grant enabled HRCP to recruit 50 volunteers to educate and inform parents in the East Bay

about past and current rental housing legislation affecting them," says Arlyce Currie, project coordinator. "The volunteers have increased public awareness of the need for laws protecting the housing rights of children and their families.

"They also trained tenants to confront discriminatory policies and developed effective enforcement methods for local ordinances. Thus, tenants have been able to secure housing by getting proper information and using the legal aspects of the project," she says. "In this way, the project responded to a critical issue which most severely impacts on households which are headed by women."

Currie notes that many of the volunteers were selected from among people with children who had experienced problems in securing housing, and from tenant organizations and single parent groups.

Although ACTION funding terminated, Sharon Mosely anticipates city governments to pick it up. "It has proven to be a most worthwhile project and there is enthusiasm and active support for its continuation," she says.

Early Peace Corps Staffers Offer Views on Agency

Editor's note: As we indicated previously, we will periodically publish short comments from current PC or ACTION staffers—people who were with the Peace Corps in the "old days." For our purposes, we mean anyone who was with PC prior to 1971 - either as a volunteer or as an employee. We asked the following three persons to give us their views of some of the changes in Peace Corps over the years as well as its contributions.

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DAVID LEVINE: Head of the Office of Programming and Training Coordination. Levine was a PCV in Ethiopia from 1964-66. He later returned to Ethiopia, first in charge of training, then as associate country director and program officer through 1970. Levine returned to Peace Corps in 1978.

"We are now more oriented toward development activities. In the last few years we have been clearer in our emphasis that the effectiveness of the PCVs is at the community level, and that the vitality of volunteers' roles is greater if they understand and carry out development activities at a grass roots level. That wasn't always true. This is one way in which Peace Corps has changed in response to the changes in the Third World.

"A major Peace Corps contribution over the years is that governments and citizens have adopted and are now using some of the skills and knowledge passed on by volunteers. Peace Corps' presence has contributed to increased self-sufficiency in many places where volunteers have served."

WAVIE McCARTHY: Chief of Travel to Executive Staff for ACTION and Peace Corps. McCarthy, as one of PC's first group of employees in 1961, began as an administrative assistant handling all overseas travel.

"It seemed to me that Peace Corps, particularly the staff, was more idealistic in those early days. And I personally believe that Peace Corps, as an independent agency had more clout—especially with other government agencies such as the State Department.

"However, I am firmly convinced that the presence of Peace Corps and its volunteers has done a lot to increase the standard of living in many parts of the developing world."

BILL TATGE: Deputy Director for Africa Region. Tatge joined the Peace Corps in 1965 as a program evaluator. In 1968 he became chief of the French Speaking Africa Division. Tatge left in 1971 and returned to the Peace Corps at the end of 1977.

"We've become much more exacting in our expectations of our volunteers. In the early days we were just learning what they could do, and often over or underestimated this. Our training has improved vastly as we learned to be more realistic in our expectations.

"A major contribution of Peace Corps has been to dispel the image of the ugly American abroad. They now know we don't all live like kings. Also, largely as a result of Peace Corps' work, other large international organizations, such as the World Bank, have come to realize that the key to development lies at the grass roots level - not just in building massive, expensive projects."

ACTION UPDATE

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