
Global Peace Services USA

...an idea whose time has come

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THREE ORGANIZATIONS WORK TO SHOW THAT PEACE IS THE WAY

The following article is based on a paper that GPS board member Harry Yeide gave at the 2001 meeting of COPRED (Consortium on Peace Research and Education).

This paper looks at three examples of new organized peace efforts and at possible relations among them, looking at possible tensions as well as possible synergies. The three groups are 1) the Nonviolent Peaceforce, 2) Germany's Civilian Peace Service, 3) Global Peace Services USA. A thumbnail sketch of each follows.

The Nonviolent Peaceforce

The following description is drawn from a paper, "The Force," by David Hartsough and Mel Duncan and on an update on the organization's web page, Sept. 27, 2001. In both versions the authors explain that the Nonviolent Peaceforce aims to develop a standing nonviolent peace force of significant size. In the first phase, the organization would aim to recruit 200 persons willing to be trained and deployed for a minimum of one to two years, 400 reserves available for training at least a month per year for 2-3 years, and 500 supporters who would contribute money and various kinds of advocacy for the project. The next phase would seek a tenfold increase in all three categories. This projection and other ideas in the proposal are presented as subsequent to modification based on continuing consultation and study.

An important emphasis is the need for invitation by a local peace group before personnel from the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NPF)

would be sent into an area of conflict. Another emphasis is on independence from all forms of national governments although it is recognized that there will have to be relations to governments. Various principles of governance of the NPF include the following: it should be international, multicultural, have gender equality, and use democratic decision-making processes. As of April 2000, there was a seven-person steering committee, several staff, and staff associates.

The German Civilian Peace Service

The German Civilian Peace Service (CPS) has been developing since 1991. It is a special form of service to the community in state-approved activities required of all males. Traditionally, many young men have met this obligation through military service, though various alternatives have long been possible. According to a paper published in English in 2000, "The action goal of Peace Teams of CPS is the prevention of violence, the ending or overcoming of violent disputes, the search for solutions which might use consensus agreement, and the assistance for those who work for reconciliation, nonviolent conflict handling and establishment of just social conditions. Thus the CPS does not take over tasks of the police or emergency services, it is not social work or

alternative service. It is not even a new kind of military.”

The assumption is that enlistees are at least 23 years old and have completed some sort of professional training. Specific training in the skills needed to achieve the goals of the CPS is to be given after one has “enlisted.” The original goal of providing 12 months of training has been shortened to 4 months. A detailed description of the curriculum is available. The emphasis of the curriculum is on experiential learning, including participating in conflict situations within Germany for training purposes, but the primary locus for the work of CPS is seen as outside the country. Sustained partnerships with local people in countries where CPS members may work is seen as essential to real help.

Global Peace Services – USA

The goal of Global Peace Services (GPS) is to foster peacebuilding service as a widely practiced activity for which there is adequate professional training. The movement promotes peace service as a career possibility in much the same way that medicine, engineering, or teaching are career possibilities. Education and training for peace service should include specialized preparation and also skills essential to other human endeavors.

A primary goal of GPS is to introduce into colleges and universities curricula that will produce a degree or a certificate in peace service, attesting to skill practice or field work in addition to peace studies already available in some colleges and universities. GPS believes there is value in preparation that extends over several years rather than several months, in order to allow for sufficient maturation of theory and practice. The programs envisaged emphasize the value of experiential learning and internships with evaluation in terms of personal growth.

GPS activities are not confined to colleges and universities. The organization anticipates and promotes opportunities for peace service learning for persons in mid-career, contemplating career change, or looking for more effective ways to deal with conflict in their daily lives. The organization has conducted a short-term program that was very positively evaluated by participants and has provided insights for further development of peace service curricula.

A Few Comparisons

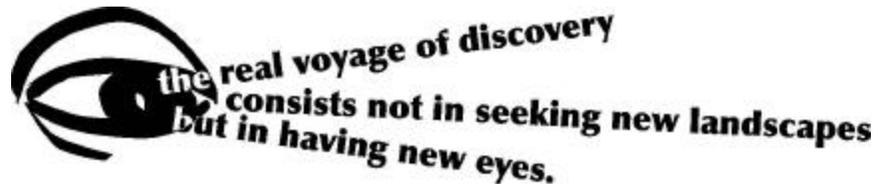
There may be different worldviews concealed in the visions of the three groups. The Nonviolent Peaceforce and, so far, the German Civilian Peace Service aim to introduce trained personnel to address particular conflicts of shorter or longer duration, especially on the international scene. They look for volunteers who will undergo some months of training and commit themselves to a few years of service. Global Peace Services aims at the long-range formation of those who will serve the cause of peace in a life-long set of choices, including career choices. There is also in GPS a less pronounced concentration on international conflict.

The Nonviolent Peaceforce and the German Civilian Peace Service might develop very different analyses of a given conflict, since the former aims to maintain independence from governments and the latter is ultimately funded by a major nation state that has its own foreign policy. The Nonviolent Peaceforce and Global Peace Services benefit from tax-exempt status for nonprofit organizations, and GPS hopes to penetrate American higher education, which in many ways is supported by tax monies.

If GPS is successful in several countries, it could become a major provider of volunteers sought by the other two organizations, since both

want their teams to have an international character. At the same time, GPS might look to the other two organizations as providers of intern experiences. The work of GPS might in the future provide developing career opportunities for returning volunteers from the other two organizations. These are speculative looks into the future. It will be some years before any one

of the organizations will be fully developed according to its vision and objectives. Meanwhile, their very existence over a period of a decade or more indicates the need for serious ongoing work to find alternatives to conventional military approaches to conflict. All three organizations are helping to build a culture of peace.



(Marcel Proust)

GLOBAL PEACE SERVICE BOARD MEETING

The Year Ahead

The GPS Board held its first meeting of the new year on the weekend of January 25-27 at the Wellspring Retreat Center in Germantown, Maryland. Newly elected members, Aura Martinez, Chicago, IL, Jean Martensen, Rockville, MD, and John Halpin, Cincinnati, OH, were welcomed to the board by GPS president, John Eriksson. Following an opening meditation, John Eriksson reflected on the events that led to the formation of GPS and the strides that have been made during its five-year history.

Believing there is a role in peace service for everyone, the Board discussed at length the 2002 action plan. Two Program Groups emerged. One group will continue to promote degree-related peace service education in colleges and universities. The other Program Group will concentrate on non-degree peace service education and skills training by promoting peace service curricula for different groups of the general population.

The Board plans to request a meeting with Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), sponsor

of the Department of Peace bill, to discuss the bill's future. The Publication Committee, which is responsible for the quarterly newsletters, is looking for a volunteer to work on the GPS web site. Molly Wallace, the coordinator of the Electronic Colloquium, briefed the Board on the progress with that project.

The Board recognizes the importance of increasing GPS membership. Membership building is a goal for the Board that needs the support and efforts of GPS members. Fundraising was also on the agenda. In order to hire staff, GPS needs a comprehensive fundraising strategy that includes a variety of sources and approaches.

The January meeting concluded with the Election of GPS Officers for 2002.

President - John Eriksson
Vice President - Mindy Reiser
Treasurer - Harry Yeide
Corresponding Secretary - Clara Doyle

Calling All Volunteers!

When we peek inside the treasure chest that is our membership, we realize that we are rich. Imagine the possibilities that our collective “peace power” could realize. At our Board meeting in January, we decided that it’s time to unleash this power and give our members a chance to get their hands into the good earth in the garden of our endeavors.

And so . . . we announce the creation of a new Volunteer List that will be a resource for Global Peace Services. This will enable us to capitalize on our members’ many talents and provide our members the way to be more involved in our organization.

If you want to be more active, contact John Halpin at gpsvolunteers@yahoo.com. You’ll be on

an e-mail list that will periodically send out updates on the work we’re doing and the ways you might be able to lend a hand. (We promise we won’t overwhelm you with too many messages!)

Right now, we are specifically looking for volunteers with skills to assist in the following:

- Web site development
- Producing a Desktop Publishing document of the synopsis of Peace Power 2000
- Fundraising (including grant writing)
- Translating our newsletter into Spanish

If you can offer assistance with any of these, would like to learn about upcoming volunteer opportunities, or would like to offer your services in another area, send us an e-mail!

Global Peace Services USA Newsletter

Editors: Clara Doyle and Mary Evelyn Jegen

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