

Staff 3/6/67

Viet Policy Hurts World Role, 800 Ex-Peace Corpsmen Say

More than 800 former Peace Corps volunteers have told President Johnson that they believe this country's policy in Vietnam "is seriously undermining the contribution American can make" toward achieving world peace.

In a letter mailed to the President last night and released to the press, the former volunteers said they were "fearful that if the disenchantment (with the war) accelerates, it will undercut the enthusiasm so necessary to the vitality and effectiveness of the Peace Corps itself."

The letter was the third addressed to Johnson in recent months by groups of young persons expressing, in moderate terms, their concern over American military policy in Southeast Asia.

The previous letters came from former Rhodes scholars and from more than 200 college student body presidents and student newspaper editors.

The Peace Corps veterans said, in part:

"We wonder if you are fully aware of the erosion of trust in our government which that policy is causing among many Americans who, like us, want to believe in the high purpose and constructive world role of the United States.

"A good deal of this erosion is caused by the growing impression that the United States is unclear about its goals in Vietnam, and is not facing realistically the alternatives available to it.

"American actions often seem unconnected to the rhetoric used to describe what we are doing, a situation that invites cynicism and suspicion about American rhetoric—and goals—in places far removed from Vietnam itself. . . .

"There are creative and dedicated people who will be reluctant to participate at all in overseas programs of the government, a state of affairs that would be unfortunate for the United States and tragic for those Americans who would thus be deprived of what should be one of the great experiences of

their lives."

The signers of the letter said they spoke "not as representatives of any group, but as individuals from many backgrounds who have had very different experiences."

The chairman of the committee which collected the signatures from returned volunteers throughout the country was Francis Andrew of Chicago, a student at the University of Chicago Law School.

Other committee members were Eric Reuther of Washington, a graduate student at Georgetown University; Burton Segall of New York, an engineering consultant; E. Phillip LeVeen of Los Angeles, a graduate student at the University of California at Los Angeles, and Albert C. Ulmer of Atlanta, a community organizer for the Southern Regional Council.