



Peace Corps Latest Casualty of Vietnam

WASHINGTON—It explains something about the state of our Union to report that one of the casualties of the war in Indochina is the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps is in a state just short of rebellion. Vice President Agnew will probably not be able to understand this fact. Peace Corps volunteers are not "tomentose," nor "effete," nor "rotten apples in a barrel," nor "criminal misfits." "Should it come to it," wrote the first who died in service, "I had rather give my life trying to help someone than to have to give my life looking down the barrel of a gun at them."

And that is what the trouble is. Peace Corps representatives have not changed since the days when John Kennedy dragged to Nikita Khrushchev that our nation was able to mobilize for idealism as well as his.

The trouble is that the nation has changed, or at least the Peace Corps thinks it has. Unable to explain their country to the people they are serving, they have turned now to responsible protest.

A movement which began in Panama has now been accepted in 20 countries and is rapidly spreading to the rest. The idea is very simple. Instead of picketing embassies in demonstrations which verify our disunion, or arguing dangerously with ambassadors who have been known to order volunteers home after hearing their views, they are doing what others their age are doing. They are coming to Washington.

Joseph Blatchford, Peace Corps director, heard four of them here recently for two hours, and he will be hearing many more as the days go by. In each country the volunteers are contributing a small amount of money—perhaps \$5 a man—to send one of their number to Washington to express their views. Volun-

teers in Korea raised \$1,200 to send their delegate.

Their message is open and clear. The following paragraphs from a volunteer in Gaborne, Botswana, might serve as an example for all of them:

"It is becoming increasingly difficult to remain here in Botswana as a volunteer, Mr. Blatchford. The ideals of peace and mutual understanding seem far more tenuous in the United States than here. How can I in good conscience promote national development in Botswana when my own government feels compelled to intervene in a civil war in Vietnam?"

"The intrusion of the United States into the affairs of a small nation in Asia does not go unnoticed here. When the United States becomes feared and disrespected, trust and respect in me as a volunteer suffer as well."

To such messages as these, Blatchford is responding with sympathy. He has declined to dispute the President in public, but he has agreed to report to the President the sentiment of the volunteers.

It will not change anything. Mr. Nixon has said over and over again that he "understands" the feeling of American youth about the war, but if so he has shoved it into a compartment of the mind labeled Things to Think About Later.