

Peace Corps Seeks Farm Volunteers Here

The Peace Corps, with the aid of the State Extension services in Pennsylvania, conducted a major agricultural recruitment drive in southeastern Pennsylvania during the last half of March.

With the assistance of Mr. M. M. Smith and Mr. J. Smith, County Extension agents for York and Lancaster, Peace Corps agricultural representatives have arranged to hold a meeting with free movies on March 27, 1974. The meeting will be in the basement of the Farm and Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Road in Lancaster, from 6 P.M. to 9 P.M. Everyone is welcome to attend.

"The drive has two goals," explained Earl McGinty, Agricultural Recruitment Coordinator for the northeast. "These are," he explained, "to explain to people with agricultural experience what they can contribute to the people of developing nations and exactly what a Peace Corps program offers them in return."

Howard Conley, recently returned from two years' volunteer service in one of India's government livestock production farms, will be visiting with farmers in these regions to explain ongoing and upcoming agricultural programs with the Peace Corps.

Conley stated "the many countries we serve are familiar with the achievements of the American farmer. They continually overwhelm us with requests for experienced farmers to work in extension, production and management programs."

There are more than 7,000 volunteers living in 68 countries. Of these, 30 per cent work in specific agricultural programs. Many other volunteers devote a portion of their time to agricultural projects, simply because food production in many developing nations is insufficient.

"Through radio, television and newspapers, we attempt to tell farmers that the Peace Corps needs them. But, both McGinty and Conley agreed, "nothing works as well as personally talking with farmers."

In outlining the recruitment campaign, they noted that Peace Corps' agricultural specialists will be teaming with extension personnel in Pennsylvania and Delaware and with area residents who have served as volunteers.

"Overseas, the need for experienced farmers is widespread, so agricultural recruiting is a demanding job," emphasized Frank Pixley, who runs the skill desk in Peace Corps' Washington office.

Pixley, formerly a bean and dairy farmer in New York State, said that in order to recruit enough experienced farmers, Peace Corps representatives will criss-cross the Philadelphia-Dover area. Because those representatives have worked as volunteers in Peace Corps agricultural programs, they can share first-hand experiences with prospects and explain in detail the various programs that would utilize each farmer's know-how.

McGinty, with four years of crop production in Sierra Leone behind him, talked about the contribution an experienced farmer can make: "Overseas, farmers have the same kinds of problems that your grandfather and my grandfather faced, without today's solutions. They need help from people like you, people who understand modern farming techniques and have a feel for the land and the people who work it."

"There are millions of small subsistence farmers around the world who need to know about the new varieties of crops and the improved package of practices that are the key to successful production. There is also a great need to improve the breeding, care and feeding of dairy cattle, sheep and hogs. These farmers are not looking for a handout or a free sack of grain; they want and need a face-to-face confrontation with an American farmer to learn his attitudes, his approaches, and his goals," he said.

McGinty added that finding out about new advances in agriculture and putting them to use is something that comes as second nature to most American farmers. But farmers in developing countries are literally starving for help, for someone who can help them learn better ways to farm.

For example, in Ecuador, where livestock improvement receives high priority, Peace Corps volunteers are helping to breed and distribute better lines of beef and dairy cattle.

In Malaysia, volunteers assist local extension services to organize farmers' associations and then promote crop and livestock information, bookkeeping and marketing practices.

In June a typical, but much needed program, will begin in northern India. Volunteers will work with the Department of Animal Husbandry in Intensive Cattle Development areas, some volunteers will be stationed at government farms for Holsteins-Freisan and Jersey cows. In an effort to meet India's economic and social goals, volunteers in this program will work with farmers to improve cattle management and feeding, increase milk production and bolster farmers' income. The majority of volunteers will work in extension through regional Artificial Insemination Centers.

Similar to the India program is one in Peru. Here experienced farmers are working with Peruvian dairymen to improve pasture use. Volunteers are introducing different types of pens, handling facilities and milking parlors. They are also involved in an A.I. breeding program and carry out vaccination programs.

A variety of programs will begin this summer throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America in general extension, irrigation, machinery operation, cooperative management, vegetable farming, livestock and crop production.

Due to the nature of the work and living conditions, most volunteers in Peace Corps agricultural programs are single men, McGinty pointed out. However, there are programs for married couples and a very few positions for families with one or two children.

Volunteers must be twenty years old, and service is for two years. All expenses concerned with day-to-day living costs, travel, medicine and hospitalization are paid by the Peace Corps.

Two years as a volunteer provide 48 days vacation and a special vacation allowance. An additional sum of money (\$75-mo.-volunteer) is amassed in the states and is available on return to this country.

McGinty speculated on the kinds of people they would like to talk to about Peace Corps during the drive: "Someone who is farming right now, of course. We would also like to explain Peace Corps to people who are no longer in agriculture, also. Growing up on a farm, or just spending summers on one, is often adequate preparation to enter some of the agricultural programs. The gap between our agricultural practices and those of many developing nations is wide. A person with rudimentary farming knowledge and the proper attitude can make a sizable contribution."

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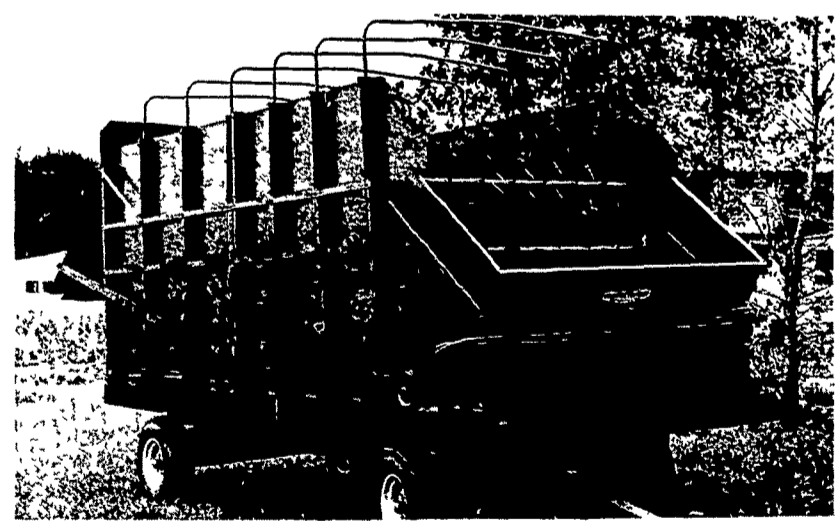
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