

CUSO: why Africans say 'no thanks'

The Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Movement's demonstration against CUSO last week touched on the core of the dilemma currently facing volunteer organizations.

Students are encouraged every year to join CUSO or the Peace Corps and go to an underdeveloped country to do great works. From the giver's side, this is a noble gesture, a generous way to obviously spend the foreign aid budget, and incidentally keep recent university graduates off the labour market for a couple of years.

But receivers tend to look upon such bounty with skepticism. The number one priority of many emerging African states is to become as self-sufficient as possible. This naturally enough includes training native citizens to become the political and academic leaders of their own country.

Yet graduates from the universities in Ghana, for example face unemployment while North American volunteers serving a two year stint hold jobs such as teaching.

Part of the problem is that the American government pays its people from home so their labour is free of charge to the recipient government. CUSO workers are at least paid by the host state.

The following is an inside view of the attitude of many people in Ghana toward the influx of volunteers. It is an excerpt from the December 24, 1969 issue of The Ghanaian Times written by Kwame Agyei-Gyeke.

Most of the volunteers, (this is especially true of those who come to Ghana for the East African programme of the Peace Corps, for instance, selects and trains only people with teaching experience and usually more mature) hold only first university degrees and have no teaching background.

During the summer holidays, some of these volunteers are given about two months' training to prepare them for their assignment. The subjects they studied in college range from Ceramic Technology to Divinity and from biology to zoology.

When they come down here, however, they teach English, Mathematics

or Science. Even though the subjects studied in college are taken into consideration when volunteers are being assigned teaching subjects, there are many occasions when the subject assigned to certain volunteers have had little connection with the subjects taken in college.

Another example would be somebody who majored in international relations, but comes here to teach mathematics all because he took mathematics as one of his subjects in college.

Another mistake those who usually assign subjects to the volunteers make is that they ask people to teach English not because they know the

person can teach English but because the Volunteer is an Englishman or a North American who speaks English as a first language.

What they overlook is that there are many such English-speaking Europeans, or people of European descent, who speak fluently but cannot do the sort grammatical analysis that any proper study of the language entails.

It can be seen from the above that most of the foreign volunteers who come and teach in our secondary schools and training colleges, have no special knowledge that graduates produced by Ghanaian universities do not have.

In fact, the home grown graduate has certain advantages. He is familiar with the educational system and if he teaches English for instance, he knows how certain words are used in Ghana and therefore is more likely to understand the work of the students than a foreigner would.

One might argue that a language should have universal meaning and application, but such an argument would be tenuous since a language is supposed to be dynamic and to help the individual to communicate properly.

Once the communication is possible, a language comes into existence, even though it might be a corruption of another language.

It is, therefore, suggested that since the volunteers seem to have achieved the ideals which brought them here — to collect the structural imbalance in the Ghanaian teaching service — it is time Ghana said "thank you" to them and their home governments for sharing their treasures with us.

A centrally co-ordinated plan must be laid out to phase out the foreign volunteers as their terms of service end and replace them with graduates who cannot find employment.

Recruiting Ghanaian graduates into the teaching service has other advantages. At the moment, most of the volunteers who come here leave after serving for a year or two. It means that every two years this country plays host to a few hundred foreign volunteers who have no teaching experience.

It takes about a year or so for any teacher to become truly conversant with what he teaches. If therefore Ghana is going to be faced with teachers who leave just when they are going to be more productive, then it means the country's educational system will not be able to boast of the crop of experienced teachers who are the pride of every nation.

At the moment, many teachers who enter the service, especially the young college leavers, get the impression, after serving for a year or two, that they are in a third rate profession.

For while their mates who go into other professions look affluent after a few years — with cars, and other facilities that indicate that they are making it, the teacher has no car allowance for instance.

To get more graduates into teaching, it means conditions in the teaching service must be improved. At the moment, there is a graduate of Legon teaching in a primary school in Accra.

Not that there it is demeaning to teach in primary school, but this situation should not arise at a time when there are so many volunteers teaching in secondary schools and training colleges.

It is true that the Ghana Government does not pay the volunteers and therefore it is cheaper to have them around. But in the final analysis there is no better policy than having your own thing.

The Dalhousie Gazette

CANADA'S OLDEST COLLEGE NEWSPAPER

Published by the Dalhousie Student Union, with offices in Room 334 of the Dalhousie SUB, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Unless otherwise stated opinions expressed on the editorial page are those of the editorial board, and not necessarily the staff of the newspaper, the Dalhousie Student Council, or the University administration. All other opinions expressed in this newspaper are those of the individual authors.

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Thieves, vandals net \$8,417.80

"Care for a chair?"
"Don't mind if I do."
"This stereo is just what I've been looking for. Do you suppose anyone would mind?"

Thefts and vandalism have reached epidemic proportions at that great ivory tower of learning, the Student Union Building.

To date, known thefts have amounted to \$6,768 while vandalism has accounted for a trifling \$1,650. That is a grand total of \$8,418 of student money wasted.

Vandals have been up to their usual tricks — slashing chairs and destroying washrooms — but the thieves have been a little more creative. Somehow 22

chairs have disappeared from the cafeteria. At \$28.50 a chair, that's a quick \$627.00.

The removal of petty items such as cutlery, dishes and food trays, totals nearly \$4000, or about half the losses due to thefts.

The SUB has also lost an amplifier, a stereo cartridge player, cushions a typewriter, a camera (\$355.00) and a time clock from the Games room. Don't worry: the clock was only worth a measly \$95.00.

John Graham, Student Union General Manager, has expressed increasing concern over this matter.

"It's a case of selfish students denying others the right to use facilities provided for the whole student body. For example, the Music Lounge is now locked up until we can install a more theft proof stereo system."

"One person has an amplifier, and a lot of students now have no place to relax and enjoy their tapes or records. And look what happens in the reading room. The magazines are taken before anyone has a chance to read them."

Campus Police Chief, Dave Bright, said that "the only way to solve this problem is to gain the co-operation of all students using the building."

He also said that students so far have not been co-operating. "The three chairs in the Music Lounge were slashed while Dalhousie students watched, but no one reported the incident. Another example is the fact that certain students know where a couch stolen from the Green Room is being kept, but they won't say where."

"If only people would realize," Bright said, "that all the property stolen or damaged was paid for out of their fees, perhaps they would be more co-operative in trying to put an end to this problem."

22 cafeteria chairs at \$28.50	\$627.00
104 food service trays at \$3.45	358.80
1 Music Room amplifier at \$250	250.00
1 stereo unit and power pack	118.00
4 cushions from Stereo Room	129.00
1 time clock from Games Room	95.00
5 money thefts	280.00
1 Praxis type writer	295.00
1 camera	355.00
dishes, cutlery, etc. (approx.)	3,500.00
8 outside light shades	340.00
assorted small items	420.00
Total	\$6767.80
Vandalism:	
Slashed chairs, washroom breakage, etc.	\$1,650.00
Vandalism and Theft per year	\$8417.80



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