

WORLD COUNCIL OF PEACE

SECRETARIAT

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RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROBLEMS OF ORGANISATION

During its meeting on September 13th, 14th and 15th, the Bureau of the World Council of Peace examined the work and organisation of the World Peace Movement. It pointed out the essential contribution which the Movement made to the peoples' recent victories for peace, and drew attention to this contribution in the statement adopted at the end of the session.

The ideas and campaigns of the World Peace Movement have reached very wide circles. They are the chief source of the immense current of opinion which has developed in the world to demand the peaceful solution of international disputes. The increasing support of new forces is bringing about a marked growth in the influence and authority of the Movement.

The importance of the results obtained and the number of tasks with which the international situation presents us, face the whole Movement with the duty of ceaselessly improving its activities and methods of work.

This fact led the Bureau in the first place to emphasise the growth and strengthening of the Movement. In many countries the national movements have demonstrated their ability to initiate actions bringing in all sections of the population and building the widest possible unity of the peace forces. In this way they have acquired an authority and influence which, because they correspond to a national desire for peace, are reflected in the attitude and statements of the most important political forces of the country.

At the same time this general strengthening of the Movement cannot be allowed to hide the fact that there are still weaknesses. These were summarised in the Bureau as follows :

- In general, the Movement has not always developed its organisation in proportion to the effect which its ideas and activities have had.

- In some countries, where the world campaign has not been adapted to the particular national conditions through specific national campaigns, there has been a limited or intermittent level of activity, generally arising from narrow aims or aims which tend, in the final analysis, to present the struggle for peace along the lines of the abstract formula "peace is better than war".

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- A tendency for the Peace Movement to disappear, and for the struggle for peace to be curtailed by the fixing of abstract or confused aims, has shown itself; some national movements, thinking to enlarge the peace front in their countries, have abandoned their programmes of independent action in order to merge into bodies set up jointly with other forces.

Some peace movements appear only as national committees. Their activity has no contact with the population of the country through local peace committees, and they are therefore unable to give effect to their decisions through mass action. At the same time a certain tendency to believe that the influence of the Movement depends essentially on the support of public figures and organisations outside the Movement, leads to failure to get down to the work of explanation and education among the ordinary people, so that in the end the Movement does not get the support of either.

- There are still national movements which, far from seeking the greatest unity around jointly agreed aims, make use of slogans which are too narrow to interest all sections of the population irrespective of their social background or their political and philosophical opinions. By their organisational principles, their forms of work and the formulation of their arguments, these movements tend to ally themselves with political parties or organisations, and sometimes to appear merely as opposition groups, for example, during elections.

In view of these observations, the Bureau emphasised the need, in the first place, to correct these weaknesses wherever they appear. In this connection it recalled that the solution of organisational problems must be looked for in the application of the principles on which the Movement has based itself in the course of its five years' experience :

The Peace Movement is one which is able to bring about or to promote the widest unity of the forces of peace. It constantly strives to bring together, without distinction or limitation, nationally and internationally, all those who accept the principle of peaceful co-existence and the settlement of international disputes by negotiation. Through free discussion it decides on aims and forms of activity acceptable to all.

The Peace Movement does not pretend to have the monopoly of the struggle for peace. It asks all individuals and organisations representing the forces of peace to co-operate with it for the success of the actions which it advocates. But it also declares itself ready to support all moves, whatever their origin, which facilitate a greater unity of effort for the relaxation of international tension. The scale of its aims, and its ability to promote activities which win a response in every country, make it a pole of attraction for all those who wish to help in the preservation of peace. The existence and the growth of the Peace Movement are thus essential conditions for the development of the activity and the unity of all who work for peace.

6. 7. The Peace Movement arises from and takes form through action. In every country its existence and its strength depend on constantly renewed activity, associating all people of goodwill in the achievement of precise and practical objectives based both on the needs of the international situation and on the particular interests of the country.

For the development of its activities, the Movement depends on the existence of peace committees in localities and in work places. These committees, with their constant appeals to all sections of public opinion, are the guarantee of the widest unity and greatest effectiveness in the actions undertaken.

After analysing the experiences of the national movements, the Bureau thought it useful, on the basis of those principles, to ask each national committee to consider the following suggestions in order to find those which can best contribute to the strengthening of the national Peace Movement :

1. - On all occasions to make clear the Movement's attitude to national and international events which have a bearing on the relaxation of international tension, either in the name of the national committee or through statements by its most prominent individuals. By this means it is possible to bring out the independent character of the Movement. In this connection the Movement needs constantly to speak out against all actions which militate against the creation of an atmosphere of relaxation in international relations, such for example, as a call to begin hostilities against a particular country, or acts of discrimination detrimental to the development of economic and cultural relations with all countries.

2. - To use the rich experience of joint actions, which have been carried through in co-operation with various well-known people and organisations, in order to strengthen and extend this co-operation. The point is to secure co-operation not simply with particular individuals or representatives of organisations, but also with the circles which they represent, since this is in the interest of the general struggle for peace. This aim can be achieved by initiating or supporting moves which can be developed on a joint level, and especially by giving wide support to those in which the Movement is taking part on an international level.

3. - To take constant care to preserve the broad democratic character of the Movement : at all levels to set up and renew committees in which different trends of opinion are represented as fully as possible; to decide aims and forms of activity jointly, all committee members being responsible for the formulation and application of decisions; the whole Movement to take part in the election of leading committees at Assemblies and Congresses.

4. - To seek the best forms of work to facilitate permanent activity by the regional and local peace committees, one activity being linked with and leading into another : signature collections, petitions and referendums leading to a campaign of deputations to all sorts of elected persons; local meetings and factory meetings preparing for bigger meetings; local and regional rallies leading to a national conference; Days, Weeks and Months of action, etc...

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Experience has established the necessity for each committee to find the methods which are most appropriate to the possibilities existing in each region or locality for joint action within the framework of the campaigns launched on a world scale; to clarify the arguments which will make the aims of the struggle for peace more real by linking them closely with the local and national interests of the population; to seek arguments and facts with which the work of enlightenment can be carried on from day to day.

5. - To consider as a permanent task of each committee the raising of the funds necessary for the good development of the Movement's activity. To this end, since, by reason of the very character of the Movement, it is not possible to levy a fixed membership fee from each supporter, it is necessary to take great pains to carry out special activities which can be developed in connection with political activities. The following methods, which are employed in several countries, can be recommended: collections designed to finance a particular activity, such as delegates' journeys, or the printing of a poster; distribution of supporters' cards and donation lists in connection with the organisation of a demonstration or a campaign; sale of material (badges, scarves, works of art etc...) at meetings, rallies and conferences; sale of publications in connection with a signature collection, etc..

6. - To maintain closer contact with the Secretariat of the World Council and with the other national movements in order to have greater co-operation and better co-ordination of activities on a world scale. These contacts can be made by means of the delegates to the Council or to Congresses, by means of the Secretariat's Bulletin and the Review "Défense de la Paix", by visits and exchanges of delegations and by exchanges of publications, films, information material, etc.

In this connection, the Secretariat of the Council is ready to give national committees all the help required.

In conclusion, the Bureau considered that the examination of these questions on the Movement's activity and organisation should be related to the achievement of the aims laid down in its Statement. This examination has an especial value in view of the forthcoming assembly of the representatives of the peace forces of all countries, an undertaking which will be discussed by the World Council at its next session.

Vienna, September 30th, 1954.

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TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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