

PEACE CORPS - 1966

Lectures 1-3 complete

Vershire, VT

Feringer notes

Last edited: 11-98

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Lecture - 1

1.The notion of the peace corps is a fundamental new direction and must be preserved. "You must have to restore the Peace Corps even if the government of the United States would abolish it." (p.1)

We are entering a new epic. Previously relations between countries were determined by each nation's self-interest. Theodore Roosevelt, in 1905, was the first "voice in the wilderness" to speak against this policy, saying that the world was now too small for such a policy, and nations must now work for the benefit of all mankind.

This idea, now taking hold, is the major foundation of the Peace Corps. It heralds a new era and portends the possibility for more peace in the world.

2.The necessity for a "peace corps" is that the world has become so divided, so fragmented, that it will tear itself apart if it doesn't solve its problems in a different way, A WAY THAT WILL ENGENDER PEACE - peace in terms of common agreement! Examples of fragmentation in terms of decision-making are, 1) the new electric company, centered in another state, shifted power from community, 2) airplanes built in another country eliminated local jobs, 3) the highway dept. in Washington D.C. decides on distant roads and bridges rather than local constructions.

3.Every technological development causes such fragmentation, and every new development expands the space in which we move, shortening the time we have to adapt to the change. (p.7)

Each new invention requires reorganization, not only of government offices, but new laws, and newly-trained people.

4. We are on this earth to unify its peoples. Technological change destabilizes the basic ties of unity because it increases the rate of social change.

5. People, for the most part, do not recognize that technological change destroys old groupings. This fact needs to be more broadly communicated and understood, as only a few, exceptional people see this. New gadgets invented everyday destroy old groupings.

Lecture - 2

1. Because of the rapid change, to which adaptation is far behind, our institutions are near the breaking point. [RF - Today, in 1997 this institutional breakdown continues. The other day a prominent doctor said, "The roof is caving in on the practice of medicine." There is little confidence in most government agencies, least of all in legislatures. Almost every decision made is justified on the basis of advantage in the short range, for commerce, regardless of the social and environmental havoc that results.)

2. There is little peace in the world, and what peace exists is only apparent.

It is unknown what peace is. You must think that the United States have not made peace in 1865. They have not made peace in 1921. They have not made peace in 1945. We live in a country in which the three greatest wars have ended without peace. It's only a semblance of peace. (p.12)

Just below the surface of decision-making there seems to be little ability to solve social problems, regardless of massive efforts to do so. Is peace the absence of war, or the reverse? Is it imposed by the victor?

PEACE CANNOT BE WILLED, like love, one can work at it, but it just seems to break out when the time is right! But by itself..."Will cannot make peace." Quoted from Goethe, (pp.13)

3. There is no common root for the term, PEACE. Two groups disagree on the method for achieving it. One group believes in contract as a basis, the other believes in rational formulation. ERH believes both are wrong.

4. The only basis for peace is for people to do something for nothing. (p.16) This they can only do if they admit that peace is neither will, nor rational, nor a "feeling," but is sacrificed for. Often well-meaning people cause great friction, so he admonishes the Peace Corps candidates to be aware that their actions in other countries can be productive, or destructive.

Your going to India is under the same stars...You will only make peace there if you can do something - something that is not prescribed by your instructions here....the real problem is:

will you find the inventive step that constitutes your experience of peace with these people:
 ...The main point is that peace is not found in us. It befalls us. We may support it. We may help that it can unfold. But you can't even call it your own plant. It is not like a seed, where we put a seed into the ground,..because it takes so many other people's peaceful endowment. (p.18)

5.The gap between the old and new orders has yet to be filled, and the Peace Corps is an attempt to do so. Only later, after some experience, after looking back on your history, will you know. To the candidates ERH repeats, "You are dangerous people." (p.9)

Lecture - 3

1.To establish peace, to re-found communities after disasters, one must, through actions, expose oneself to misunderstanding. Only then will one understand. One can understand the nature of situations only by looking back.

b.For the formation of human character, nothing that lasts shorter than a lifetime is important. And three generations are needed to agree on something before peace is possible. (p.2)

c.When we are exposed to so many events and experiences in a lifetime of new technical advances, how are we to understand them? So little of each event is left in our memories.

d.Peace is brought about by unifying space and time. With each new technological invention, expanded space and shifting groups, and contracted time are the factors for which appropriate adaptation must be made if peace is to be established.

e.We are on earth to do the necessary things, without which life cannot go on. We need to understand what needs to be done ahead of time, and with each succeeding generation there is less lead time to discern this.

f.Our lives must be spent being willing to fulfill an indispensable task in the community:

He who does the one thing necessary all alone, against an army of enemies, he's of course the greatest. That's why the Crucifixion ranks as the one greatest act in humanity, because He was the only one who grasped that it was necessary, to show that in defeat we can be victorious.I say this because you must not think that everything in human history is natural. Everything is supernatural. (pp.6,7)

g.Language is not natural; there is no natural language. Incest is natural, and it must be a taboo. Language was created by humans because it was necessary for them to communicate in order to find peace between themselves. But this is not a natural process - it is more super-natural. Little progress in social life is "natural," it is "super-natural."

h.Mankind, from the beginning, has always tried to outlast the individual life. Everything of any importance must last longer than a single lifetime.

PEACE CORPS - 1966 - Review

Peace is one of the central themes in all of Rosenstock-Huessy's thought, because it represents a primary measure of a vital community. This series of lectures presents an outline of major themes, which present barriers to peace today. The major barrier, he argues, is defined by his "law of technology," namely, that each advancement in technology shortens the time available to adapt to change - and widens the space (geographic boundaries) of the effects of the old procedures it replaces. He suggests that the Peace Corps has the potential as a tool of foreign policy, for success in creating true peace, where previous policy only created new wars. For these reasons it offers an important link in his thought for social regeneration.

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