



**THE
CLAIM
OF
HUMANITY**

*INDOCHINA ARCHIVE
MONOGRAPH FILE*

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE



EUROPE, 1917

“Twelve million refugees from a devastated area as large as the whole of France and Belgium are scattered for thousands of miles. . . . The heavy hand of famine resulting from crop failures has recently increased the already almost unbearable distress of the people. . . . At last report ours was the only relief expedition in the whole of Russia, all . . . other organizations . . . having withdrawn because of the difficulties.”—The Committee’s report on its first year of service.

IN THE LIFE of each of us there are moments when our heart cries out against some cruelty or injustice and we are moved by compassion. At those moments humanity claims us. Sometimes we attempt to shrug off the claim and turn away. Sometimes we answer the call.

The founders of the American Friends Service Committee, as Quakers, were predisposed to answer that call. Quakers believe there is something of God in every man and every human life is therefore of transcendent value. Love, they hold, is the outward manifestation of this inner spirit and the most powerful influence in the affairs of men. A natural consequence of their religious commitment is the expression of love in service to those around them.

The Committee was organized in 1917 as a constructive response to the entry of the United States into World War I. Its work began with relief and medical services in France and Russia and was extended to Germany after



IN SEARCH OF PEACE

“ . . . taken at its simplest, the AFSC conference program is an attempt, a successful one and not being made anywhere else, to establish meaningful personal relations among diplomats. I found the experience useful, and still keep in touch with many. It is my impression that, as we grow to hold positions of power and influence in international life, this program will be a growing influence for good.” — An ambassador who earlier in his career attended a Service Committee conference for diplomats.

the war. In subsequent years the Committee moved beyond relief for the victims of war to efforts to bring about international understanding and an end to war. Much of its energy now goes into programs striving for a world in which men are neither debased nor exploited for any reason.

From the beginning the Committee has been nonsectarian and nonpolitical. Its work, originally supported solely by Quakers, soon earned the respect and challenged the imagination of others. People of diverse backgrounds and religious convictions now work on the staff, serve on program committees, and support the Committee financially.

THROUGH THESE YEARS of growth and change the Committee has remained true to its first impulse to service. All its programs stem directly from concern for individual human lives. They are experiments to see what love can do.

As a private agency the Committee



OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

Tired muscles satisfy a deep yearning to love instead of hating, build instead of destroying. These young people have a vision of a world where the highest priorities go to those things that unite men. More than 500 young Americans work on Service Committee projects every summer in Europe, Africa, Asia, and North and South America.

is free to experiment and risk failure. It uses this freedom to initiate programs and develop techniques that others can apply on a larger scale. To keep a project centered on the goal of becoming an integral part of the community, the Committee often plans from the beginning for its transfer to local responsibility.

IN TRYING to resolve inequities and conflicts, the Committee works for social changes that will extend rights and opportunities to everyone. In attempting to change the institutions of society, however, it keeps the individual in mind and works in ways that are consistent with its objectives. When it helps migrant farm workers on the East Coast to obtain services they are entitled to, it also calls forth the best in the growers by considering their problems and seeking their cooperation. When it carries out a community development program in Baroda, India, it respects the dignity of those involved by helping them



ANSWERING THE CALL

For several years social workers and educators from Central and South America have been coming to Mexico to take part in the community development projects of the Service Committee. They study the techniques used so that they can take new ideas back to their own countries.