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# World Neighbors Reject CIA Funds

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By Katherine Hatch

A worldwide, self-help organization headquartered in Oklahoma City was offered funds by the Central Intelligence Agency, it was disclosed Friday.

But World Neighbors, Inc., 5116 N. Portland, turned down the offer which was made "several years" ago.

Disclosure of the offer — and its rejection — was made in an editorial in a current issue of the World Neighbors newsletter.

Dr. John L. Peters, organizer and president of the organization, wrote the editorial in the light of recent revelations that the CIA had poured \$12 million into 29 private organizations which had international ties.

World Neighbors, Inc., began in 1951 as a non-governmental, non-sectarian organization devoted to aiding newly emerging nations through cooperative self-help projects. It presently has more than 100 programs

in Africa, India, Latin America and the Philippines.

Dr. Peters, a Methodist minister who was a philosophy professor at Oklahoma City University when a sermon sparked creation of World Neighbors, explained the choice which was presented:

"Should a forthright undertaking such as the advancement of free world interests be supported by covert financial assistance from the CIA?"

The organization's rejection of CIA help was not a criticism of the CIA, he said.

"Knowing how well the institutions of freedom have served mankind, we ardently believed in their defense and their extension.

"Nor did we disesteem the CIA in its rightful role," he said. "In our kind of world such an agency is a necessary instrumentality for the preservation of the national interest."

Dr. Peters observed, "It is far more difficult than many imagine to secure adequate funds for a crucial and urgent task.

"And the grander the task the greater the temptation to justify any means which provide for its accomplishment."

Recalling the beginning of World Neighbors as an "honest, spontaneous expression of concerned individuals for their neighbors in the so-called 'underdeveloped areas,'" Dr. Peters noted:

"We soon discovered that the task we had undertaken was far more onerous than we had at first assumed.

"And as the full dimensions of our self-imposed assignment became apparent our resources seemed obviously inadequate."

Several alternatives were available, he said, and "the

final decision was no easy one.

"Our early success had opened up opportunities to serve in many critical areas," he said, some of them already threatened by "disaster and subversion.

"To find adequate implementing funds — from private sources and in sufficient time — proved to be impossible.

"But funds were, we discovered, available — for a price," he continued, referring to the CIA's offer.

"And we were assured that the mortgage need never be announced and might never be foreclosed," he added, meaning the CIA funds would remain secret and the government intelligence agency might never call on World Neighbors with a special request.

"We decided to reject the funds offered," he said. "We

would not recant our initial avowal. Even so, there were times when we wondered if we had not paid too high a price for our autonomy."

Dr. Peters said "several years" have passed since that decision was made and noted the possibility that World Neighbors might be serving in more countries had the funds been accepted.

"But we had to make a choice," he said.

"We felt that freedom, to be infectious, should not be compromised. Our decision awaits the judgment of time."

The newsletter was sent to 30,000 donors to World Neighbors and to other worldwide organizations, a spokesman said.

"Dr. Peters wanted our donors and persons in our overseas projects to know that World Neighbors is just financed by people," he said.

The editorial probably will be reprinted in the organization's overseas newsletter which has English and Spanish editions totaling 11,000.

Dr. Peters was in California Friday on a series of fund-raising appearances and was not available for comment.

In concluding the editorial, he declared, "Neither directly nor indirectly has any agency of government made contributions to, or demands upon, our program."