

P. Wechsler, James

creasing in importance, but as yet receiving slight consideration, of the advisability of imposing the same restrictions on public employees engaged in different activities. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that neither reason nor logic dictate that the rules concerning one employed in a certain governmental activity necessarily be the same as those applicable to one employed by that same government in a different activity.

Bruce Murray, until his recent dismissal, was a Peace Corps volunteer in Chile. As reported by James Wechsler in the New York Post, he was dismissed because he authorized a Chilean newspaper to publish his letter criticizing a recent Peace Corps ruling which declared it improper for Peace Corps volunteers to sign, as Peace Corps volunteers, a "Negotiations Now" petition. Although so questionable as to appear implausible, signing said petition constituted, according to the Peace Corps' directive, an interference in Chilean politics.

As indicated by Clayton Fritchey in an article in the New York Post Mr. Jack H. Vaughn, Director of the Peace Corps, has reversed the policy as it applies to publications in U.S. news media.

But what of Bruce Murray? Given the facilities of modern communication such as the Associated Press and the United Press International, is the difference between publishing a letter, critical of U.S. policy, in a U.S. newspaper and publishing that same letter in a host, or other foreign, country newspaper so great as to warrant the dismissal of one who chooses the latter course?

For the benefit of my colleagues, I suggest serious consideration of the following articles—the first by James Wechsler in the New York Post of July 18, the second by Clayton Fritchey in the New York Post of July 21:

[From the New York Post, July 18, 1967]

A BATTLE OF THE PEACE CORPS
(By James A. Wechsler)

Echoes of what will inevitably become known as the "Bruce Murray Case" may haunt the Peace Corps for a long time.

Murray talked quietly yesterday about the events leading to his recent dismissal from the Corps unit in Chile. He is a light-haired, genial, neatly-dressed young man, quite indistinguishable in outward aspect from ambitious contemporaries who drink martinis on the bar-car after a day's labor in Wall Street. He has neither the stereotyped tones nor brooding demeanor of a "case."

But the issues stirred by the fate of this political war casualty have created problems of conscience for many other volunteers and for serious men in the leadership of the Peace Corps.

Murray joined the Corps in 1965 immediately after receiving a master's degree in music at UCLA and, after training, was assigned to Concepcion, Chile, in October of that year. He taught music at the university there; he worked with the university orchestra and spent another part of his time in choral exercises with juveniles held in local prisons. He also devoted hours to teaching English at the local YMCA. Throughout this interval he lived in a Chilean slum. The diversity and dedication of his activity offer a renewed glimpse of the anonymous services being rendered by thousands of volunteers in so many places.

Then, last May after long introspection about Vietnam, he lost his anonymity. He and several others signed a "Negotiations-Now" petition circulated among volunteers.

Soon thereafter an area representative of the Corps visited the group and read a letter announcing that it was improper for Peace Corps personnel to identify themselves as members of the Corps in signing such a declaration.

Murray thereupon drafted a lonely statement, asserting that the restriction violated both his personal rights and the spirit of the Corps. He sent copies to Peace Corps chieftain Jack Vaughn, two other officials stationed in Chile, and The Times.

About a week later a newspaper in Concepcion (El Sur) published a UPI dispatch describing the Peace Corps edict prohibiting volunteers from revealing their connection in signing any Vietnam dissent and reporting that one member of the group had asked to have his name removed. At this point Murray committed his explosive sin. He gave a copy of his letter to El Sur, which published it the next day. In doing so he made it plain that he was speaking only for himself.

Within 48 hours he was interrupted at an orchestra rehearsal by a Peace Corps aide and informed that he had been recalled to Washington. There were a series of amiable but futile meetings with Vaughn, and his deputies. Murray refused to agree to change his course and was politely but firmly "terminated." His present hope is to return to work for the University of Concepcion if his draft board approves.

Why did Murray fight so hard for the right to identify himself as a Peace Corpsman in challenging our Vietnam policy? Perhaps the better question is: why did anyone in Washington (was it the State Dept.) insist that he be punished and thereby dramatize a signature that would otherwise have received little notice?

Murray plausibly contends that his credibility in Chile (where left-wing forces continually try to brand the Corps as a nest of "imperialist spies" and CIA operatives) was at stake. The formal contention on which his dismissal was based—that he was "interfering" in Chilean politics—was a bureaucratic fantasy; the fact of life is that no significant segment in Chilean politics supports the U.S. position in Vietnam.

"When I left," Murray says, "everybody I knew was in favor of what I was doing—professors, the people I lived with, even people I met casually in the street. I never really met anyone there who backed our escalation in Vietnam."

More recently five Peace Corps volunteers in Ecuador, led by Paul Cowan, published a letter in The Times proclaiming their disagreement with our Vietnam stand. It is a measure of the surviving decency and ambivalence of the Corps' leadership that their heresy will not be punished.

In response to inquiry, a Corps spokesman in Washington said yesterday that the distinction was that they had been cleared because they had not carried their message to the press in Ecuador and that much of their protest was aimed at the Peace Corps itself. The point is well-intentioned if not well-reasoned.

One hopefully concludes that rational men have recognized the peril of a full-scale rebellion in the Corps and are finding ways to justify abstention from further reprisals.

So perhaps 25-year-old Bruce Murray didn't really lose the larger battle. The sad question is why any Washington bureaucrat ever believed anything could be gained by opening fire on him and undermining the integrity and character of an organization that has been—by deed rather than word—the worthiest voice of America in recent years.

[From the New York Post, July 21, 1967]

THE PEACE CORPS RULING
(By Clayton Richey)

WASHINGTON.—In politics, as the late John F. Kennedy and Fiorello La Guardia proved,

there's nothing like admitting a mistake. It's disarming, and it clears the air.

The latest public official to discover this is the able director of the Peace Corps, Jack Vaughn, who has just saved himself of a lot of future trouble by sensibly reversing a ruling which abridged the free speech rights of Peace Corps volunteers stationed around the world.

It won't be necessary now for the American Civil Liberties Union or others to test in court the constitutionality of a recent order by Vaughn against volunteers openly criticizing U.S. Vietnam policy, and in identifying themselves as Peace Corps workers in doing so.

It still leaves in some doubt, however, the propriety of firing Bruce Murray, a 25-year-old volunteer from Newport, Rhode Island, who protested against our Vietnam policy in a letter to a newspaper in Chile where he has been serving. Despite Vaughn's having rescinded his original order, Murray will not be rehired.

On the other hand, Peace Corps officials say there will now be no punitive action against the five young volunteers in Ecuador who wrote a letter to the New York Times after the Murray dismissal in which they said, "We feel obliged to express openly our disagreement with the war in Vietnam, and to protest the Peace Corps ruling which denies us the right to identify ourselves as volunteers when taking stands on U.S. foreign policy issues."

Murray was one of 92 volunteers in Chile who were warned last month to disassociate themselves officially from a circular attacking the Vietnam war or face disciplinary charges. Vaughn said he had notified the group in writing that they were free "as individuals" to express their opinions to the President, to the Congress, or to the U.S. press if they "completely avoid" public identification of their "Peace Corps connections." They were told that "letters to the U.S. press for possible publication cannot include your Peace Corps connection."

The justification for firing Murray, but not the five from Ecuador, is that the Ecuador volunteers placed their letter in an American newspaper, while Murray had his published in a Spanish-language newspaper in Chile. Vaughn's new order, which goes out to the field this week, still forbids foreign publication.

In this connection, the agency says it is maintaining its "long-standing policy which prohibits volunteers from speaking on or engaging in the politics of the host country to which they are assigned."

Nevertheless, Vaughn appears to have gone a long way to meet the objections of the Civil Liberties Union which, in a message to President Johnson said, "The importance of protecting dissent in the midst of tension, which you yourself have endorsed on many occasions, points up the need for prompt action by the Administration in guaranteeing Peace Corpsmen their First Amendment rights."

Also in a message to Vaughn personally, the ACLU said: "A long line of Supreme Court decisions makes perfectly clear that government employment cannot be made contingent upon the relinquishment of the First Amendment right to petition the government and to express opinion."

An important part of the Peace Corps' "magic," according to Harris Wofford, formerly the associate director of the agency, "has been that its volunteers have been freer agents than ever seen before in any bureaucracy."

Volunteers, he says, go abroad not as ambassadors, or propaganda agents, or even civil servants. "They go as citizens free to agree or disagree with their President . . . to agree or disagree with American official policies . . . they are making visible what, for too many people around the world, has usually been invisible about America—our relatively open society."

W. William F. (Congr.)