

In-ACTION kills

Over 11 years ago, in December 1960, the Peace Corps was born. Thus far its life has been a stormy and uncertain one. But where is it now? And where is its future?

Formed to bring the technology of highly industrialized America to its less-developed world neighbors, the Corps is the embodiment of an ideal—that knowledge can be shared in a constructive manner among nations. Somewhere along the line, that ideal has been lost.

Today, the Corps and its domestic counterpart, Volunteers in Service to America, (VISTA) seem to be dying a less-than-comfortable death. The sorry state of the two can be traced to several causes.

In the first few years of its existence, the Peace Corps was a growing area of interest in America. It became the thing for those "involved in the movement" to enter the Peace Corps or VISTA in order to do their part for humanity. Enlistment and budgets soared in both programs. But then something happened.

In March, 1971, President Nixon came to Big Red Country and spoke to UNL students in the Coliseum. During his speech he announced formation of a new ACTION program which, took charge of both agencies.

(ACTION, you will recall, is the agency which recently cut off funds for NU's highly-rated NOVA program).

Agreed, both agencies were in bad shape when they reached ACTION. The Peace Corp's manpower had dropped from 42,000 in 1966 to 19,000 in 1970. But the ACTION program, which was supposed to act as a booster shot for the lagging programs, has instead nearly finished the job of killing them off.

First and hardest to explain of the two programs' woes was financial. In a Congress which didn't batt an eyelash at countless millions in giveaway foreign aid, ACTION found it harder and harder to obtain funds even equal to those given to it the session before.

Despite bi-partisan support from such diverse sources as Sens. Barry Goldwater and Hubert Humphrey, the Corps-VISTA budget was pared mercilessly.

And ACTION managed not to help the situation much, either. Evidently too busy fighting for its own survival, ACTION did practically nothing to help raise funds for the Corp-VISTA setup. And so the two agencies were forced to cut back their programs to the bone, leaving them in their current financially depleted state.

But the problem goes deeper than that. Even within the Corps, which was founded on a noble ideal, problems began to erupt.

Instead of remaining with its planned individual-to-individual approach with one person helping and teaching another, they became institutionalized. Teaching and learning became by-the-instruction-manual functions.

The Peace Corps and VISTA volunteers working among those with annual incomes as low as \$100, found themselves to be "rich men" with salaries of \$2,000 per year. This suddenly made them over-revered and important—and suddenly not one individual to another. The volunteers found themselves unable to solve problems in culture between themselves and their trainees.

All this reflects the crux of the entire Corps problem—the gap between ideals and action. Americans today are all too fond of saying one thing and doing another; the radical chic of yesterday becomes the complacency of today.

And so the ideals of the Peace Corps and VISTA have turned into non-news. Middle America has written them off, forging ahead to other causes.

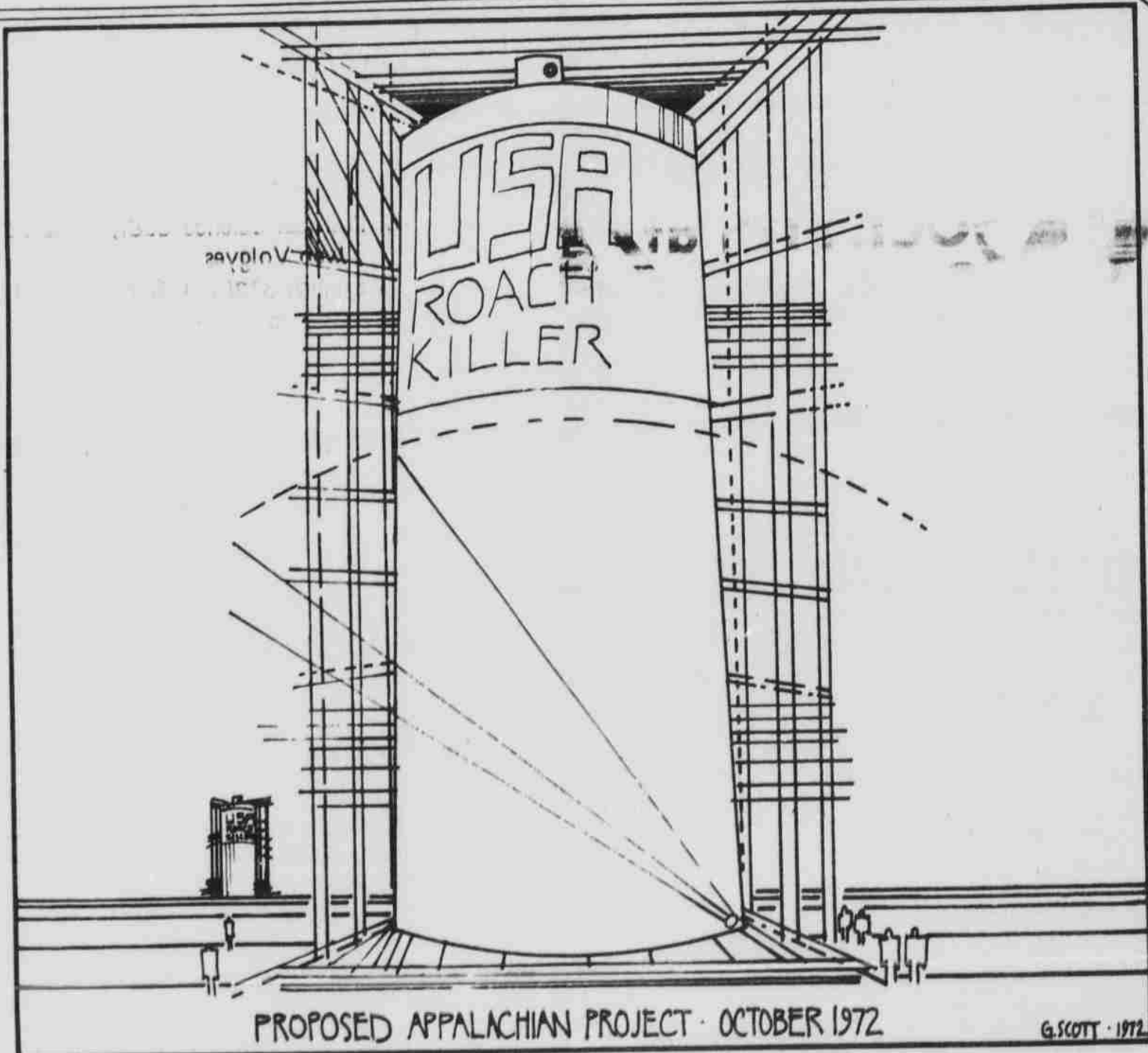
Which is why they're not financed, their volunteer count has dropped and their programs are disintegrating from within—self-help has become a dead ideal.

And with the death of this ideal, the Corps and VISTA bit the dust as well.

Jim Gray

Jud' n'
Maude
confront
the enemy

arthur
hoppe
innocent
bystander



PROPOSED APPALACHIAN PROJECT · OCTOBER 1972

G. SCOTT · 1972

Jud Joad wearily climbed the ramshackle steps to his little cabin up the road a piece from Appalachia Corners.

"I'm back, Maude," he called. "And I'm bringing you some good news."

His elderly wife pushed open the torn screen door with a bony shoulder, rubbing her hands on her flour sack apron. "You mean you got the can of roach killer, Jud?" she said happily. "That's just fine. The little varmints are about to drive me near right out of my mind."

"Now hold on, Maude," said Jud, easing himself into a rickety chair and shrugging off his suspenders. "The Government Man said he didn't have no money to give us for stuff like roach killer. But he says we're going to get something a sight better instead."

"Not my gingham curtains, Jud?" Maude said hopefully. "Not after all these years?"

"Something better'n that."

"Tell me, Jud," said Maude with the eagerness of a young girl. "Tell me right now."

Jud cleared his throat and said slowly: "A brand new Trident submarine."

Maude fanned herself with her apron. "The sun

got you, Jud?" She looked around at the barren, scraggly hills. "What we going to do with a submarine?"

"It ain't just for you an me, Maude. It's for all us Americans. And we're going to get a whole bunch of 'em, plus a flock of new bombers, too."

"Well, I do like seeing an aeroplane flying over, particularly at sunset. It's a right pretty sight. And I reckon submarines must be pretty, too. Though I never did see one. But what's that got to do with my roach killer, Jud?"

"Well, the Government Man says it looks like Congress is about to give the President the \$75 billion he wants to buy these submarines and bombers and all sorts of other stuff like that we need. So there ain't no money left for roach killer."

"It's only 59 cents a can, Jud."

"That's just what I told him, Maude. But he says we want a can, other folks'll want a can. And it's bound to mount up. What the President's got to think about, he says, is defending us from our enemies."

"The President, Jud, he thinks roaches are friends?"

"Now o'course he don't. But he figures the

Russians are our real important enemies, even though he went to Moscow to make friends with 'em. Who knows, they could attack us any time."

"But the roaches, Jud, they're attacking us right now all the time."

"Now tell the truth, Maude. Won't you sleep better each night just knowing we got all them submarines and bombers out there defending us from our enemies?"

Maude shuddered. "Not with all them roaches crawling around," she said.

Jud rose and put an arm around her. "Don't worry, old gal. Once the President gets through dealing with the Russians, he'll get around to the roaches and maybe even give us a dollar or two more in food stamps."

"When'll that be, Jud?"

"Well, I don't rightly know. But you got to leave it up to the President when it comes to defending us from our enemies. That's his job, Maude."

"I guess you're right, Jud," said Maude with a sigh. "But I can't help wishing he'd start with those closest to home."

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