



A SERVAS VISION



For Servas to become stronger in the future there are several important aspects of our practices we must consider.

1. Our future depends on getting in younger active members, not just travelers who don't remain active after their trip. There are many ways this can be done but most important of all is to shape our program in ways that will attract and inspire younger participants.
2. Our present image is that of a travel network only. 'Until we get a more substantial image we will not make much progress. In fact we may continue to hemorrhage. Building a foundation of service would conflict in no way with our open door hospitality system but could greatly enhance it. With a less superficial image we can better hope to get the backing of serious people and other organizations. We would also be more likely to get grants and financial support.
3. we need to establish a future planning committee. The gathering in San Francisco was too short to do the kind of brainstorming we desperately need to do. But this can be done by all of us even when we are not in a large conference. Let me throw out some suggestions here.
4. If we can awaken the original vision of a *WORK-STUDY-TRAVEL SYSTEM* it could put some body into our fleeting ways.

WORK would not be for pay. In most places paid work without a work permit would be illegal and even at times risky. However there are many other possibilities. We could make Servas really mean "We serve".

1. Service work camps are common and thriving
2. Working on host's farms is also possible
3. Working in communal groups is a good experience, too
4. Working with on-going peace building programs in various countries such as settling refugees, education for homeless children, gardens to produce food for needy
5. Servas might have some socially useful projects of its own:-
 - a) working with refugees
 - b) working in racial tension areas to build understanding
 - c) working on environmental projects
 - d) working together with minorities such as in ServComs*
 - e) working in war torn areas to help rebuild

STUDY need not be formal and we never meant it to be. Without over systematizing it too much we might establish some guide lines for learning and traveling. Servas travelers who plan serious studies in social change, environmental movements and reduction in conflicts might be given special reductions, even some financial aid. There are many organizations that would be interested in furthering such studies and Servas travelers would enrich their trip by having such serious focuses.

(Incidentally I have written a detailed outline guide for anyone wanting to understand the social dynamics of a rural community deep enough to see into its future which I would be happy to share with any seriously interested person.)

TRAVEL can be on many levels with many points of view. As we increase the numbers of serious travelers we can send the tourists into other systems which welcome those just looking for cheap hospitality and help seeing the tourist sites. Our hosts, most of whom are really serious, will welcome travelers with concerns and serious interests.

5. *HOSTS AS COMMUNITY GUIDES*—With our heightened sites hosts will no longer see themselves as just friendly stopovers but as staging posts for travelers who want to learn. Although they don't know personally all the things the traveler wants to learn about they know their community well enough to guide the traveler to local people and places where they can further their understanding. The hosts will be enriched in the process, by getting to better understand their own communities. They will also gain a great deal from having thoughtful visitors:

6. *ANNUAL MEETINGS THAT ATTRACT YOUNGER PEOPLE*—If these yearly gatherings reflect the above program serious young people will come and bring in the new blood our network so badly needs. Reports of the exciting Servas projects around the world from delegates who have been active in them, video reports etc. will make the gatherings real and inspiring. Lively discussions on how to continue and improve the various ones and start new ones will also enliven the program.

7. *MEETING FOR A WEEK IN A CAMP WHERE WE*: swim, play volley ball, folk dance on the lawn, put on skits and play and sing together will be memorable occasions. If we can put them on at a price the younger people we want with us can afford we will have as many as we want.

The world is overflowing with younger people looking for a vision. Too many are being sucked into cults for lack of mature alternatives. We have a marvelous worldwide network waiting to be used for social renewal and constructive building. We have many outstanding, courageous, caring, compassionate Servas members who would help build such a program if we could formulate out goals in ways they could fit in. Today they are working with other programs because Servas does not give them the opportunity to do their socially constructive work through our programs because we don't have any. Today we have a choice. We will turn our beacon on and thrive. Or we will fumble on losing more hosts in many of our strongest areas each year. The receptiveness of the conferees in San Francisco gives me greater hope than I have had in a long time for the bright future of Servas.

Note : The above is an accumulation of many years searching and many months preparation for the San Francisco gathering. Before attending I would not have dared present this more comprehensive vision, but do now with a belief it is possible, at least in part, to realize. I was hoping for this kind of brainstorming at the meeting and wished it would come from those attending rather than from me. Anyway here it is for what it is worth.

**A ServCom is a special kind of work camp where half are members from the minority community being served and half are volunteers from outside. It includes a specially focused folk education by elders that gradually draws all participants into a deeper historic understanding of the minority group, its beautiful traditions and its heartaches and struggles to survive and maintain its identity. By living, working and recreating side by side, participants hopefully form lasting friendships and all gain a new perspective on the particular minority group served, both those in it and those helping it. The concept is a combination of Danish folk high school, work camp, and intercultural parties initiated by Rachael Davis Dubois, NY Quaker.*

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(Founder of SERVAS)