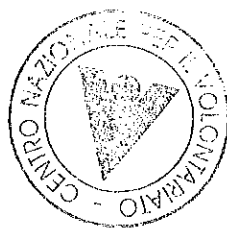


Ten Years After The First National Convention of Studies on Voluntary Service

by Luca Rinaldi

Notes of the Centro Nazionale per il Volontariato

COPIA UNICA



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**TEN YEARS AFTER
THE FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF STUDIES ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE ***

A Synthesis of the Main Reports of the Six National Conventions on Voluntary Service

1980 - 1990

* Publication issued within the scope of the Convention with the C.N.R. (Italian National Research Council) - the Sponsoring and Financing Body of the study on "Family, Social Marginalization and Voluntary Service"

FOREWORD

It has now been ten years that, at two-year intervals, we have offered occasions for meetings and reflections on themes related to voluntary service: what it is, what it does, what it can do with the social context it lives in, of which it knows defects and potentials and which it wants to contribute in improving.

We have thought it could be useful to offer a very brief synthesis of our previous five National Conventions, just when we have chosen to face up to our Country's "information world".

In reading this synthesis, it should be taken into account that they are "dated"; and the situations highlighted therein may no longer be extant. But they are also the history of a cultural, social and political evolution that has evolved round the themes of voluntary service over these years.

Our hope, for our part, as is indeed in the objects of our "Centre", is to have contributed in forming a "culture" of voluntary service, not as an end in itself, but so as to create a "culture of solidarity", still weak in our Country and in the world as a whole; for different reasons, going through a strong crisis today.

If it has been possible to give some idea of the cultural path that we have gone through together, the merit will all be of Luca Rinaldi, working at Volontariato Oggi (Voluntary Service Today), our Centre's information agency, who has tackled this task that is not easy; to him we are most grateful.

Maria Eletta Martini

FROM THE SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY, FRANCESCO COSSIGA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE FOURTH NATIONAL CONVENTION ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE "PROMOTION AND TRAINING OF VOLUNTARY SERVICE OPERATORS TO CHANGE SOCIETY AND INSTITUTIONS".

... Our Republic owes a great deal to voluntary service, thanks to which it has also been able to overcome several moments of crisis, creating a higher quality in the overall development of the Country.

... In a democratic State such as we have in Italy, in a State where a great deal of room is reserved for both public and private autonomies, that has been constituted with a pluralistic outlook in its cultural inspirations and in its social, political and even territorial configuration, there is no contrast, there cannot be one and there must not be one, between the public system and voluntary service. And this not only to ensure full expression to the principle of liberty. On the one side, voluntary service would never be able to cover in practical terms the entire area of demand. On the other, no public system can, again in practical terms as well as in principle, turn down the generosity of voluntary service movements.

... We must never forget that voluntary service is solidarity, it is an expression of humanitarianism, it is an essential condition for living together, it is even a basic component of the capability of the state to operate within the social context. If all this is true, voluntary service shall never have, and neither shall it ever have to have, a marginal position.

And voluntary service also has great political value: it is at all times connected to a great longing for peace, to a concept of relationships, national and international, that is closely based on man. In this way, there are no barriers to voluntary service and there cannot be any. You cannot prevent one man from going to the help of another man: anyone preventing this renders no service at all to the cause of peace and liberty.

... Our republic, in these forty years of democratic life, has not grown only because of the freedom of expression of our opinions, of our interests and of the political options: it has also grown, perhaps essentially so, by virtue of the quality of the people and of the quality of life among different people: by virtue of a demand that no longer clamours just for more equitable "quantities" in life but, significantly, for a richer and more human "quality" of life.

These qualities, I am proud to highlight as the representative of the national unity, are ever higher. To its development the "people" in voluntary service have given a contribution of outstanding value and the debt of gratitude on the part of the nation is thus deep and important. And I have come here to give testimony to this.

Francesco Cossiga

THE FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION OF STUDIES ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Viareggio, 1980

The refounding of the welfare state, that is, of that political structure that, independently of his income, provides each citizen with equal social, health, educational and social security services, is clearly in Italy today a need that cannot be further delayed. **The refounding of the welfare state**

The debate on the crisis of the Welfare State, open for years now in the main countries of Western Europe, has also landed in Italy, even though this kind of organisation of the "public" side has been accomplished much later in our Country than in the larger European countries. In assessing this state of crisis we cannot but take into account that the degree of efficiency of the services themselves has been shown to be very poor if compared with what is going on in other countries.

Within this reference framework, public opinion has begun to assign great importance to the phenomenon of Voluntary Service, due both to the quality of the real offer of services in the face of the inadequacies of the Welfare State, and to the implicit proposal of a new model of the culture of the State that rejects the vision according to which the State itself is the sole and exclusive agent of social change.

Welfare State and Voluntary Service

Thus voluntary service presents itself as the expression of a critical, albeit constructive response, in the very nature of man, not against the "public" as such but against the omnipresence of such "public". It translates into the refusal of bureaucratic standardization, into a search for less anonymous services.

In its modern meaning, "voluntary service gives life to forms of action that are tendentially continuous, brought into being by individuals or groups who operate according to innovative and personalized programmes, with a view not so much of charity but of a real social service" (Paracone). **A new cultural model offered by voluntary service**

Organized voluntary service thus offers a cultural model that is rich in propositional content and takes on a political significance that goes well beyond the specific fact of the simple performance of a service.

The voluntary intervention, in fact, does not exhaust itself in the mere

"technical" performance of the service but combines the cultural action of solidarity with a shared responsibility of the other person's problems. The phenomenon of organized voluntary service, that belongs in the private sphere, precisely because of that extra bit that it manages to offer, can contribute in finally overcoming the public-private dichotomy; in fact "the development of voluntary service does not mean that tasks are turned over from the public to the private sphere, that government is reduced to a role of the simple paying agent, rather, it involves all the available resources in the operation of specific social services, in the accomplishment of forms of synergy, of co-operation, of a responsible division of tasks" (Paracone).

Given the importance of the phenomenon and its widespread development throughout the territory, the need is felt for some acknowledgement of the "status of the voluntary service operator", to go hand in hand with an appropriate and updated form of training for those who are engaged in interventions of a continuous nature.

It is thus important to have legal instruments in place that identify such procedures as are necessary to place relationships with voluntary service above uncertainty, arbitrariness or merely an occasional form.

In this light, article 45 of the Health Reform Act has great importance, as a leading example, in that it acknowledges a specific role for voluntary service operators.

What is voluntary service in Italy today?

First of all, we must highlight the ethical content of the challenge thrown down by voluntary service; in fact, the cultural hypothesis of "something for nothing" - at least at the personal level - in a society such as ours where only profit and success count. But the better to understand the special features of organized voluntary service in Italy we can summarize them in 5 main points:

1) It is a constant, a given and indispensable enrichment for the quality and liberty of life in every democratic society. Thus, it is not an emergency action with an extraordinary character or a phenomenon of a return to the private sphere which - if at all - is a transitory aspect of such behaviour.

2) It is not exclusively a phenomenon or a movement that is limited to young people, and neither does it have a "specific" female character.

3) It does not want to constitute a possible alibi for any inadequacies of central or local government in the execution of their institutional tasks. On the contrary, it considers essential to its role an inducement to apply the results of its experience by transferring them on a continuous basis to the "body politic", to the community.

**Overcoming
the "Public -
Private"
dichotomy**

**Acknowledgement of the
status of
voluntary
service**

**Cultural
hypothesis of
"something for
nothing"**

4) It has a growing need of meeting the forces of the people. It wants to enhance its democratization so as to avoid becoming an expression of personal gratification for economic or cultural élites.

5) The object of voluntary service is to personalize, humanize, debureaucraticize the relationship between the body public and the citizenry. But it cannot be used "functionally" or in the first instance with the objective and the illusion of a quantitative reduction of the current costs of social services" (Tavazza).

At this point we can provide a definition of voluntary service that can always be integrated and perfected: "The voluntary service operator is a citizen who, having fulfilled his statutory duties (family, profession, etc.) and those of a secular nature (administrative, political, trade unionist, etc.) makes himself available at no cost to the community. He commits his abilities, the means he has, his time, in a creative response to any type of emerging need, with a priority for citizens in his territory; this takes place through a continuous commitment of preparation, service and action, at the individual level or preferably as a group, avoiding any action that may be in parallel with the activities of the State" (Tavazza).

**Definition of
voluntary
service**

Voluntary Service and the Body Public

Since voluntary service is going through a period of rapid development, it appears important to provide a legal framework to promote and not to clamp down on the social reality under way; the guidelines of the subject's regulation must therefore be identified in order to define the overall criteria of acknowledgement and of importance related to this experience, thus "establishing a basic regulatory framework, that is to indicate exclusively the values and the perspective within which the social reality and the legal mediation can be combined (see, as an example for all, article 45 of Public Law No. 833/78)" (Lipari, Piepoli, Tavazza).

**Legal
framework to
promote
voluntary
service**

If it is further recognized that the experience of voluntary service is placed at the cross-roads of "public and private work", a specific legal framework must be provided for its initiatives that should not encourage the start of a process whereby tasks are transferred from the sphere of the "public" to that of the "private" and neither should it simply accomplish an attempt to limit the territorial bodies to a role of purely monetary supply. Their object is higher, indeed, as already said, an involvement is looked for of all available forces, through well-defined methods of participation of voluntary service operators in the design, operation and control of some types of social services.

**Specific legal
framework**

The Statutory Organization of Voluntary Service

The better to identify the figure of the voluntary service operator, we can use that which transpires from the statutes, that is, from those "laws" that the voluntary operators themselves have freely and autonomously taken upon themselves as the criteria for governing their experiences. This shall at least avoid the risks of improvisation.

In this respect, we feel we can state that the spontaneous and organizational commitment of voluntary service operators always has a global motivation that transcends the individual assistance sector in which the commitment is made.

Global
motivation

In general, this motivation is of two types: religious or social/secular.

If we then look at the different statutes it appears that: 1) "The activity that the organism statutorily proposes itself to carry out does not usually have a profit motive; 2) the participation of the individual voluntary operator in the social activities knows no bounds and never has a relationship with the body other than the no-cost concept" (Lipari, Piepoli, Tavazza).

The statutory clauses highlight another dimension of voluntary service: the duration over time of the commitment to assist and of the association's bond.

What clearly emerges after these past few days is the need for a legislative instrument to go into the merit of the questions raised. The lack of an overall legal framework is felt throughout the "regulatory production, which, precisely because of this lack, exhibits continuity gaps and uncertainties in the type of attention given to the phenomenon, oriented though it may be towards the principles that inspire participative democracy" (Lipari, Piepoli, Tavazza).

An overall legal
framework

Quotations are taken from: **"VOLONTARIATO, SOCIETA' E PUBBLICI POTERI"** (Voluntary Service, Society and the Body Politic), (by Luciano Tavazza), Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1980.

MAIN REPORTS

"Il volontariato anni '80: realtà e contraddizioni di un fenomeno di rilevanza culturale e politica" (Voluntary Service in the Eighties: Reality and Contradictions of a Culturally and Politically Important Phenomenon) (C. Paraccone);

"Il volontariato in Italia: attività consolidate ed esperienze emergenti" (Voluntary Service in Italy: Consolidated Activities and Emerging Experiences) (L. Tavazza);

"Volontariato e pubblici poteri: la legislazione nazionale e regionale e le convenzioni con gli enti pubblici" (Voluntary Service and the Body Politic: National and Regional Legislation and the Conventions with the Public Bodies) (N. Lipari, G. Piepoli, L. Tavazza).

THE SECOND NATIONAL CONVENTION OF STUDIES ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE

VOLUNTARY SERVICE IN REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOKS AND IN THE STUDY OF NEW SOCIAL STRATEGIES

Lucca, 1982

The second national convention on voluntary service gives us a highly variegated frame of reference that it is difficult to bring back into an easy pattern.

Notice is taken that voluntary action and organization represent the emerging dimension of the new upcoming statutory set-up. Motivation can include "civic growth" and, at the same time, an enhanced distrust on the part of the citizenry towards public institutions.

1. Sociological Analysis

Trying to identify the reasons for the phenomenon, Ardigò has illustrated some hypotheses. The first possibility of development of the phenomenon is given by the weakening of the structure of relationships between the top of the pyramid and the peripheral units. In fact, in this crisis post-industrial society where the dissemination of information has followed a geometrical evolution, where the average level of education has risen a great deal, "voluntary action and organization are led to give a more significant contribution than in the past for the restructuring of society and of the State. Voluntary action, co-operation in also personal services, underground economy and micro-entrepreneurship, tend to be configured as an emerging "third dimension", in third place to the administrative and representative state and with respect to the macro-market".

**Weakening the
relationship
between the
top and the
peripheral units**

Third dimension

A second hypothesis suggests that in the relationship between the State and the "third dimension", after a first moment of separation, a degree of partial integration can take place, as has already occurred as regards the relationship between the State and the Market.

Moreover, a third hypothesis should also be considered to the effect that voluntary action autonomously integrates to an increasingly important degree, albeit always prevalently on a local level, that space concerned with the protection of workers especially in the role as consumers and users of services, which, in their retreat, the unions have left wide open.

Lastly, a fourth hypothesis. "Voluntary associationism in its variegated and not fully institutionalizing expression, follows and confirms Tocqueville's theory according to which representative democracy cannot be super-determined by the authoritarianism of the administrative welfare state if it is not checked and controlled by pluralist and particularly local citizens' associations.

There are at least two areas where voluntary operators are committed: those services that are functional to the quality of life (not in substitution of the necessary welfare services on the part of the public sector but, rather, as an integrating and innovative part of these), the prevalently local protection of citizens as consumers and users of public services.

Voluntary service cannot be identified with private charity; it does not repair the damage by the system and neither is it appropriate to ask this model of association to lead the way in the removal of those causes that generate situations of "new poverty": this is the role of politicians.

According to Mrs. Martini, MP, "voluntary service accomplishes a new relationship between the public and private spheres within the institutions, who are charged with the primary task of the orderly conduct of affairs and with planning; it has a specific significance, due to the recomposition between the public and private spheres through the identification between the individual instant and that of the community; it has a humanizing function against bureaucratic risks and it is the expression of a widespread popular action; but it cannot, within the institutions, become a replacement for professional services, the black economy, the improper use of persons in difficulty, so as to replace, at a reduced compensation, missing staff or become an unwitting scab on the occasion of a strike".

2. Legal Basis

Going into specific theme items of the Convention "Voluntary Service in Regional and Local Legislative Outlooks" it has been pointed out that it is necessary to attempt the legal regulatory road so as to avoid, due to the legal initiatives at the regional level, the creation over the Italian territory

**Partial
integration
between State
and "third
dimension"**

**Voluntary
associationism
as a factor of
the demo-
cratization of
the State**

**Definition of
voluntary
service**

**Avoid a
"patchwork"
legislation**

of a "patchwork pattern" because such a structure would risk the creation of punitive differences among the economically weaker regions which, precisely for this reason, would need a more efficient voluntary service as an integration of the activity of the public sphere.

Legislative delays have not had strong repercussions on the territory because the legislative interventions already in place do not have directive functions on behaviour as they have been limited to a description of the reality as it exists.

At this time, such legislative initiatives, which within the different regional contexts, have referred to the Voluntary Service phenomenon, are in the order of some dozens. But only three Regions, have already promulgated laws on Voluntary Service: Friuli, Valle d'Aosta and Apulia: the first with an overall regulation for the "enhanced assessment of voluntary service" (Law No. 74/1981); the second related to the activity of "voluntary service associations in the sociological and health sector" (Law No. 46/1981); the third with a regulatory intent on voluntary initiatives in matters of blood and organ donations (Law No. 68/1979).

In the meantime, several other Regions are discussing a number of bills on the subject.

It would thus appear that the stage is now over where reference to voluntary service was timid, almost incidental. But the need is still felt for "an overall regulation addressed to the constitution of integrated mechanisms for operating social services within which the activities of voluntary service associations are not merely of an occasional or chancy nature" (Lipari).

On his part, Lipari expresses strong criticism on all laws or legal proposals that do not go beyond abstract enunciations of principle; and limit themselves to generic commitments in favour of voluntary service initiatives. Moreover, looking globally at the indications emerging from the legislative work at the regional level, the gap between intentions and accomplishments is still manifest. This in spite of the fact that the recognition of the autonomous and not at all supplemental role of voluntary service within civic society is by now fully accepted.

But, as already pointed out at Viareggio two years ago, there is still the risk of a legislative regulation of voluntary service tending to highlight its purely operational profiles; and since we have here a case of relationships between Public bodies and Voluntary Service associations, in particular governed by conventions, the regulatory norms can appear to be closely connected to the financial aspect of voluntary service activities.

It would, in fact, be "very serious indeed, especially in a period of economic recession, if some voluntary service experiences were to be used for surreptitious constitutions of relationships of public employment" (Lipari).

Three existing laws on voluntary service

Need of an overall legislative instrument

General nature of laws on voluntary service

Autonomous, not supplemental, role of voluntary service

Financing voluntary service activities

Within the recent thoughts expressed by parliament regarding voluntary service, albeit within its acknowledged autonomy, significant importance is attached to the bill (No. 2828, 16 September 1981 Chamber of Deputies) tabled by Mr. Salvi tending to regulate the Co-operative Societies of Social Solidarity; these go beyond the interests of the members, as is normally the case, and tend to the overall good of the community in which the Co-operative Society operates. There is thus a prospect of the formal constitution of co-operative structures directed to the fulfilment of needs, all of a non-material nature, of members and non-members alike.

Co-operative societies of social solidarity

3. Legislative Orientation

After these reflections, it would appear necessary for voluntary service to be legally guaranteed within a space of freedom to allow it to be fully deployed.

Perhaps, the most correct legislative way can be represented by a "Statute of Voluntary Operators" to follow the outline of the "Statute of Workers" to avoid risks of categorization, of "fencing in", as has been denounced on more than one occasion.

Towards a volunteers' statute

Thus a "Statute" with the intent of differentiating voluntary service from any and all types of subordinated work and to guarantee its activity.

According to Lipari, it is also necessary to "rigorously reject the proposal to include individual voluntary service within the legislative framework; this exists and shall always exist, but it does not request any legislative tutelage; it could represent a realistic risk of recruitment for the "black economy".

No law on individual voluntary service

Within this perspective, voluntary service must be enhanced in its relationship with the State's decentralized powers.

The participation of voluntary service operators in the planning of services could take on great significance; conventions between local government bodies and voluntary associations "is one road that administrators must pursue and expand to the vast range of sectors where voluntary action is active" (Martini).

It would appear possible to say at the end of the convention that a "political dimension" is acknowledged for voluntary service; "a political function which, while rediscovering the authenticity of its role, be really in favour of the polis which belongs to each one of us as it belongs to everyone" (Lipari).

Political dimension

But precisely as a function of this political value, by virtue of its social

dimension, voluntary service lays claim to a "statute" with a promotional character and that ensures its autonomy and originality, even when it operates in contact with government structures.

Only in this way will voluntary service remain a critical conscience and a stimulating force for political parties, trade unions and all institutions.

**Voluntary
service as a
critical
conscience**

Quotations are taken from: "VERSO UNO STATUTO DEL VOLONTARIATO" (Towards a Statute of Voluntary Service) (by Luciano Tavazza), Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1982.

MAIN REPORTS

"L'evoluzione dei problemi del volontariato italiano" (The Evolution of Problems of Italian Voluntary Service) (M.E. Martini);

"Le motivazioni, la ricerca e le prospettive del convegno" (Motivations, Research and Perspectives of the Convention) (A. Ardigo);

"Gli orientamenti emergenti dall'elaborazione legislativa regionale sul volontariato" (Orientations Emerging from Regional Legislative Action on Voluntary Service) (N. Lipari);

"Azione volontaria, modifica del presente, responsabilità personale" (Voluntary Action, Changing Current Structures, Personal Responsibility) (N. Lipari);

"Il ruolo del volontariato nelle incerte prospettive della società degli anni '80" (The Role of Voluntary Service in the Uncertain Perspectives of Society in the Eighties) (A. Ardigo).

THE THIRD NATIONAL CONVENTION OF STUDIES ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE

VOLUNTARY SERVICE AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Lucca, 1984

Ever since the 1978 rejection of the proposal to abolish article 45 of Public Law 833 acknowledging that freely-constituted Voluntary Service Associations "share in pursuing the finalities of the national health service" (the abolition proposal was motivated by the desire to have the health service operated solely by the State) the situation has changed substantially; be it sufficient to point out that from 1982 to 1984 no less than 44 regional laws have been enacted bearing directly on voluntary service, while a further 22 regional bills of this type are being considered.

**Art. 45 of Public
Law No. 833/78**

As can be seen, the need for the legal acknowledgement of the phenomenon has become impelling, as voluntary service is closely and primarily connected with local needs and also because welfare and health are the business of the Regions. It has thus been in the evident nature of things that local legislators have taken it upon themselves to interpret such requests that originated within the community; this, however, has led to fragmentary and heterogeneous legislation.

Another emerging significance, again related to the changed relationships with the public institutions, is that of the Rossi Sciumè - Colozzi work: according to this study, 66% of voluntary service associations has a more or less constant relationship with the public powers.

1. Rossi Sciumè - Colozzi 1983 Research (Commissioned by the Ministry of Labour) - quantitative and qualitative figures.

Among the most significant data, we can highlight:

a) the ratio throughout the national territory of voluntary service to resident population is 1 to 89;

b) the following is the typology of the 7,024 groups that we investigated (it is calculated that there are some 15,000 in Italy): 58% is repre-

sented by "groups associated with large organizations"; 22% by "co-ordinated groups" whose action does not have national or international impact but does go beyond a purely local aspect; 19.1% is represented by local autonomous groups.

c) "The high percentage of adults engaged in "cost-free" activities highlights the tendency of activities, carried out side-by-side with guaranteed work, of a solidaristic or voluntary nature" (Rossi - Colozzi).

2. The Role of Voluntary Service in Domestic Legislation

Greater awareness has been shown over these past few years of the role of voluntary service: special commissions have been set to work at the Ministries of Labour and of Health.

Voluntary Service "is the expression of an alternative cultural model, it is born locally but it tends to penetrate the system, it accomplishes the fullness of those that perform it but, at the same time, it expresses a very high quotient of social solidarity" (Lipari).

Now, however, there is "the risk that the intervention of voluntary service be used exclusively as a short-term instrument for accomplishing economies, not as a model for welding individuality to the collective well-being, capable of making people understand that the life of the individual is fully accomplished and expressed only when it can meld in with other lives in a community relationship" (Lipari).

In going through the many legislative initiatives on voluntary service with a regional origin it is easy to see the objective of financial savings on the part of public bodies. Rather, the approach has to be an attempt to rationalize the serious, constant, committed intervention, typical of voluntary service, in a position to make its mark on the body bureaucratic; also avoiding bureaucratization of voluntary service operators, changing the qualitative contribution of the individual with the institutional bodies, accepting "the challenge arising from voluntary service, not as one day's alibi, but as a directional criterion of a long season" (Lipari).

The proposed overall bill on voluntary service of Senator Lipari (bill No. 576 filed with the Senate on 13 March 1984) is designed with this precise object in mind. Thus, not a "manifesto law" and neither an "auspice law" or a "treaty law". The intention of the proposed bill, in fact, is that of "breaking down the discrepant attitude between words and deeds on the theme of voluntary service which is exhibiting a tendency to becoming a constant in the political debate, returning to a legislative technique that is typical of our legal tradition by formulating clear and brief regulations, each endowed with its own visionary content" (Lipari).

Voluntary service as an alternative cultural model

Voluntary service as an instrument for accomplishing economies

Bill by Lipari

3. Local Government and Voluntary Service

On the local level, government must increase its awareness of the enormous potential held by the voluntary service movement, within a society in which deresponsibility and growing corporativism are rampant.

It must "be aware of and develop the great potential, both as inspirational values and as a concrete aid in responding to needs of various kinds, and above all as the expression of an increasingly mature awareness that true democracy means taking back, in a direct manner, on the part of local communities, the expression of actual needs and the organization of its response to them" (Bicocchi).

It is, indeed, "the voluntary service associations that today constitute the truest form of participation by the citizenry in public life ... with the complete assumption of responsibility towards the needs of the people, on the part of those that give it a concrete answer; and it is exactly for this purpose that it also has the moral and even technical authority to question the functionality of public services and, more in general, that of social expenses in this sector" (Bicocchi).

And yet, voluntary service is still an underestimated reality; but since it is a reserve of qualified and available human resources, it wants to become the main interlocutor of the Public Institutions in order to stimulate a rethinking-out of the sector's strategies.

First of all, and to this end, the function of the local body must be rethought-out: its essential object is that of responding to the needs of the population; the refusal of the logic of expansion internal to the public service purposely enhances voluntary service in itself, thus placing it in a position of strengthening the local body in participation and democratic consensus.

According to Bicocchi, the problem of the relationship between Local Bodies and Voluntary Service must be tackled "in the awareness, both cultural and political, that it is not a case of merely adding another item of expense to local government's budgets or of a sectorial question to be tackled in addition to the so many others that local government already grapples with, but of a perspective which opens a discussion, right from its very foundations, on the complex themes of social costs and of the development of relationships, on the part of local self-government organs, with the most authentic expectations and needs".

The challenge is directed to provoke a concrete rethinking of overall social costs, to verify its rationality and productiveness, ensuring a harmonious balance between public, private and private-social spheres, while aiding with no ideological prejudice such interventions as best serve the community's real needs" (Bicocchi).

It is important that participation in planning, in sharing mutual con-

Voluntary service as a real form of participation

Crisis in public services

Provoking a rethinking of overall social expenditure

trol of the operation of social services, while also trying not to pulverize the already scarce financial resources through a regional and local-government plan that, even before starting, establish objectives and ends.

In this perspective, the financial and legal instrument which, by virtue of its flexibility, is best adapted to co-operation between Local Government and Voluntary Service Association, is the convention. In this respect, it is to be hoped that, at the level of national overall law and of regional legislation on voluntary service, a legislative intervention shall take place to determine the minimum content of these very conventions. Moreover, due to the chronic delays in obtaining payment from Local Government, it would be appropriate and urgent to introduce clauses for linking payments to the cost of living index and for allowing penalties to be introduced if such delays actually take place.

While being aware of this complex frame of reference wherein, briefly, voluntary service can be taken as the symbol of a new statutory situation which transcends and overcomes individualisms and corporativeness, it is necessary to open a constructive debate with the political forces "because we will not get new laws on this, and proper conventions, if we are not going to understand all the political (and party-linked) significance of voluntary service in a democratic country" (Martini).

During this convention the **inauguration takes place in Lucca of the National Centre for Voluntary Service**, in response to the needs expressed on several occasions during previous meetings. An instrument in the hands of voluntary operators to link up together and to organize themselves more, to promote activities, but also a centre for research, studies and documentation, for the joint use on the part of voluntary operators and Institutions. A means at the disposal of associations that want to count more, a privileged reference point for an effective co-ordination.

Quotations are taken from: "**VOLONTARIATO ED ENTI LOCALI**" (Voluntary service and local government) (Luciano Tavazza), Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1985.

Participation in the planning of interventions

Minimum content conventions

Voluntary service as the symbol of a new statutory situation

National Centre for Voluntary Service

MAIN REPORTS

"Istituzioni e volontari nel tessuto sociale del paese" (Institutions and Voluntary Service Operators in the Country's Social Texture) (M.E. Martini); "I gruppi di volontariato in Italia elementi per una classificazione" (Voluntary Service Groups in Italy: Elements for a Classification) (G. Rossi - I. Colozzi);

"La problematica del volontariato nell'azione di governo, nell'attività del Parlamento, nel dibattito delle forze sociali" (The Problems of Voluntary Service in the Action of the Government, in the Activity of Parliament, in the Debate of the Social Forces) (N. Lipari);

"L'attuale legislazione delle regioni e delle province autonome sul volontariato nel quadro della politica di programmazione sociale" (Current Legislation in Regions and Autonomous Provinces on Voluntary Service within the Scope of the Strategy of Social Planning) (V. Pannuccio);

"I rapporti giuridico-amministrativi con volontariato a livello provinciale e comunale: Politiche dei servizi e strumenti di attuazione" (Legal and Administrative Relationships with Voluntary Service at the Level of the Province and of the Municipality. Strategies of Services and Operating Instruments) (G. Bicocchi);

"Finalità del Centro nazionale per il volontariato: studi ricerche e collegamento fra le associazioni" (Finalities of the National Centre for Voluntary Service: Studies, Research and Links Among the Associations) (G. Bicocchi);

"Gli impegni delle istituzioni e del volontariato di fronte alle trasformazioni della società italiana" (The Commitments of Institutions and of Voluntary Service Within the Context of Transformations in Italian Society) (M.E. Martini).

THE FOURTH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF STUDIES ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE

PROMOTION AND TRAINING FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE IN ORDER TO CHANGE SOCIETY AND INSTITUTIONS

Lucca, 1986

This Fourth National Convention on voluntary service is especially characterized by the attendance, on the day of the inauguration, of the President of the Republic of Italy, Francesco Cossiga, who thus testifies in a real way on the importance that the phenomenon of voluntary service has assumed in our social life. Voluntary Service that the President defines as "the highest form of participation", also highlighting once again that it is only through participation that a real democracy is built.

In our Constitution there is no juxtaposition, only a strong correlation between voluntary service and the institutions. The institutions must not reject that which is offered by the generosity of voluntary movements; but it is necessary to avoid voluntary service from becoming functional to the institutions which could create channels of consensus through the instrumentalization of initiatives of voluntary service associations. Such initiatives of participation are, on the other hand, to be encouraged and promoted, acknowledging in them the dignity of forms of "diffuse democracy", avoiding voluntary service being slavishly subordinated to the institutions.

In this perspective, voluntary service is willing and able "to contribute to the civic and institutional change of our country" (Martini). It is therefore essential to sustain "every effort for the formation of voluntary service operators" (Cossiga), taking care not to tamper with the genuine aspiration which is such a significant feature of voluntary service" (Cossiga).

PROMOTION

Speaking of the promotion of voluntary service it must be highlighted that voluntary service has not been promoted by the institutions but has been born spontaneously. Only much later has it found institutions inte-

Voluntary service, the highest form of participation

Voluntary service wants to make a contribution to changing our country

What promotion?

rested in promoting it; it is sufficient not to get in its way, to avoid caging it in with too rigid a legislation, to avoid it becoming a politicians' instrument; all direct intervention is dangerous; rather, it is enough to create favourable conditions so that voluntary service can develop and function in order to:

- ensure the serious intent of voluntary service associations, setting objective and clear criteria for registration in the roll;
- acknowledge the right to use public structures;
- exert very serious control on the utilization of possible contributions for given projects (it is more useful for voluntary service if such contributions are linked directly to given projects, rather than given generically to the associations);
- facilitate information on voluntary service in regional radio and television services, in the local press, in schools, and also encouraging the production of audio-visual aids.

It is also useful to distinguish voluntary service from associationism in general (frequently a rich lode of volunteers) and also from social solidarity co-operative societies.

There is a form of traditional individual voluntary service, both of the religious and of the secular type, that has a high moral value but which rarely faces up to the problem of the causes of the state of need to be tackled; it does not therefore consider the theme of political action: on the contrary, it purposely shies away from it and, in this type of voluntary service, it becomes apolitical; in actual fact, the choice of leaving things as they are, and not to commit oneself to change them is a political choice.

There is then also a new type of voluntary service which tends to move at one and the same time in the service to outcasts, the awareness of society to their problems, the political action to fight the causes of outcasting.

There also exists a voluntary service which we could define as "technical" (Fire Brigade, etc.) and a socio-cultural voluntary service. All voluntary services provide a contribution to change in society in the sense that it promotes and strengthens the culture and the habit of solidarity; but some forms of voluntary service provide it in a direct manner, others in an indirect and remote manner.

From a greater solidarity in the social texture it is thus possible to go directly to the influence on the strategies of institutions and on legislation.

WHAT PROFESSIONAL TRAINING?

It is important to put the question of which form of professional training is best to promote such change, fully aware that "every training intervention is manipulative" and manoeuvres "the rules of the game in relationship processes" (Merlo).

Promotion of what kind of voluntary service? Individual and traditional voluntary service

"New" voluntary service

Importance of voluntary service

These are the theses which professor Palmonari has illustrated during the Convention.

Voluntary service operators must find in an autonomous manner the lines for their professional training as an unrenounceable need of freedom, going beyond the spontaneous superficiality such as "any experience we go through trains us, our training comes all from experience, not from books"; we have here a case of defining our own projects to check and fine-tune in an equal dialogue with the institutions and the groups deeply committed to the cultural process.

Voluntary service must always tend towards solutions that are not merely of a welfare nature, with the commitment to go beyond such negative situations that are the origin of the operational intervention.

All the problems which voluntary service tackles today have very deep historical roots. It is indispensable to take them into account not only in order to understand the sense of the individual problems, but also so as to set up solutions that are adequate and not simplistic.

The social sciences have a lot to offer for the programmes of voluntary service movements; it is appropriate that voluntary service projects be compared systematically with updated information from the social sciences.

In order to construct realistic projects it is necessary to be a group of persons who communicate one with the other, who know how to communicate with the outside world and know how to listen and be aware of what is going on; it is therefore indispensable that professional training relate primarily to group activities, without technical exasperations but also with no spontaneous illusions.

Training must find effective forms of co-operation between professionals and volunteers, taking care that the originality and the cultural autonomy of the voluntary service groups are not violated.

It is important to pay attention to every cultural diversity, avoiding the establishment of egocentric communications (based on the language of one's group) and thus attempting to decode the language of other groups so as to pick the real sense of what they are expressing.

It is lastly indispensable, if change is to be brought about, to have the courage of identifying strategic points in the overall social picture that appear to be unsatisfactory and to define a radical alternative to them.

THE CONTENTS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

What must the voluntary service operators know to carry out their service effectively? They must certainly know about the sector in which they operate; the conditions of real need and the causes that generate them; the

Awareness of the causes, of the political situation, etc..

political lines and the emerging cultural lines.

They must be aware of the political and administrative situation which voluntary service must stimulate; of existing services and their quality; of budget criteria and priorities; of relationships between public and private entities; of regional legislation, social services and their application; of mechanisms to have an effect on the political powers.

There is, for sure, the need to train a volunteer who is suitable to carry out his (or her) service: with a period of learning and adequate training and updating. This is especially true in view of the commitment of socialization and awareness-building that must be brought about with appropriate instruments and means.

For voluntary service it is basic not to work "for" people but "with" people in the style of sharing; "to know how to be, so as to be able to design" new answers to needs by living them from the inside in the first person.

The volunteer's ambition must be "to help people help themselves", by promoting their autonomy, creating in the persons aided the stimulus to move themselves into the service of others: the commitment to solidarity is thus a spiral-like development; voluntary service must become a multiplier of itself.

Suitability for service

"To know how to be, so as to be able to design"

Voluntary service as a multiplier of itself

It is important to highlight what has been expressed in the report of the commission on professional training: "The volunteer must train himself without getting lost as a result of not seeing prior experiences taken as a model, he must develop through experiences tackled in a concrete manner, documenting them and comparing them with others, criticising their weak spots"; being suspicious of "academic" training and always striving for a dialogic and non-conformist outlook.

The commitment to enhance training is in any case fundamental so that what also President Cossiga has warned against does not take place: "to be left out of the actual and professional evolution of society's different sectors, almost as if the volunteers were 'professional reservists'". This, indeed, is not a role that is suitable for anyone who transforms one's own solidarity into a civic commitment.

Voluntary service must be its own trainer

Volunteers, not "professional reservists"

Quotations are taken from: **"PROMOZIONE E FORMAZIONE PROFESSIONALE DEL VOLONTARIATO"** (Promotion and professional training of voluntary service operators) (by Luciano Tavazza), Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1987.

MAIN REPORTS

"Volontari «gente comune»" (Volunteers «Ordinary People») (**M.E. Martini**);

"La nostra Repubblica deve molto al volontariato" (Our Republic Owes a great Deal to Voluntary Service) (**F. Cossiga**);

"La promozione del volontariato oggi" (Promotion of Voluntary Service today) (**G. Nervo**);

"I processi formativi per la qualificazione dei volontari e contribuire a una nuova cultura nelle istituzioni" (Professional Training Processes for the Qualification of Volunteers to Contribute to a New Culture in Institutions) (**A. Palmonari**);

"Volontariato e Mezzogiorno" (Voluntary Service and the South of Italy) (**S. Zoppi**);

"La formazione del volontariato" (Professional Training for Voluntary Service) (**G. Pasini**);

"Investire nella formazione, magari consorziandosi" (Investing in Professional Training, Perhaps Even in a Consortium) (**R. Merlo**).

THE FIFTH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF STUDIES ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE

POVERTY AND MARGINALIZATION: A COMMITMENT OF SOLIDARITY AND CRITICAL CONSCIENCE OF VOLUNTARY SERVICE WITH A VIEW TO PREVENTION

Lucca, 1988

The debate has focused on the poverty and marginalization that our opulent society produces.

Reflections have been made on whether the so-called "two-thirds society", with its wealth and its privileges, is an acquired and immutable given, almost a physiological factor typical of the well-off society, or, rather, whether it is worth one's while to move so that the one third that is on the fringes today is brought back into play and re-acquires its dignity by taking on a given social role. It is in this perspective that voluntary service offers its abilities of criticising, designing, sharing, searching from the inside, social and even political solutions that allow marginality and poverty situations, old and new, and not only financial, involving an increasingly large number of people and which are the features of our consumption society.

The "two-thirds" society

One third physiological margin?

MARGINALIZATION AND POVERTY

One of the most important factors of marginalization, paradoxically, is the welfare system itself "when its object is not that of breaking up the process under way, but is limited to the provision of elements of adaptability to the overall system; rather than acting on the roots of marginalization and on the existence of the facts with a view to eliminating it, it tends to a containment of such potentially conflictual effects that can arise between

Welfare system as a factor of marginalization

the groups on the fringes, and between them and society as a whole, providing such minimal resources as are necessary to contain the non-fulfilment of needs within acceptable bounds. Thus not only does welfare taken on its own not eliminate marginalization but, actually, by making it acceptable (and accepted) it actually strengthens it" (Sarpellon).

The welfare system is in itself even repressive inasmuch as it mortifies aspirations to change both by eliminating the more serious situations and by "obliging the people on welfare to a model of passive behaviour through the imposition of administrative procedures necessary for maintaining welfare handouts".

Marginalization is completed through segregation in "total institutions", closed and separate worlds (the various institutions for senior citizens, mental patients, minors, etc.) but at the same time an integral part of a system of social relationships.

The prime factor of marginalization, however, is still the productive system. In fact, the capitalistic system does not cease to produce new marginalizations through the occasional, precarious and underpaid use of parts of the "labour force".

The concept of marginality has become increasingly larger and has not been limited to a mere "economic" vision.

"New poverty and new marginalization seen as areas of affective, relational and environmental privation would thus no longer hit the lowest social stratum but wide swathes of the middle class itself. This same class that is in a position of controlling (through political parties, trade unions and corporative associations) the allocation of resources to the welfare state. It is clear that while this process of marginalization is going on, the middle class will do all it can to legitimize "a use of public resources to its further advantage against the weaker (and marginal) social classes. The objective clearly is one of reaffirmation of the centrality of the large middle class (paradoxically invoking "the new marginality"), thus recreating conditions for an even deeper marginality of the lowest social classes".

Poverty

Some figures on the Italian situation have been illustrated: the number of persons living in poverty is 6,238,000 (11.1% of the Italian population). This is the so-called "relative poverty", one is "poor", in fact, when each of the two components of the typical family consisting of two persons has an average monthly outgo for consumption not larger than 50% of the average per capita expense. Of the 6 million poor (60% in the South, 40% in the North), almost half live in extreme poverty, that is, they have an average monthly outgo for consumption not larger than 40% of the average per capita expense.

Segregation into closed worlds

The productive system as a first factor of marginalization

Centrality of the middle class

6 million poor

In addition to the 6 million there are another 4 and a half million defined as "almost poor". We therefore have more than 10 million persons who live in conditions of more or less severe economic need. **10 million in the hardship area**

WHO ARE THE POOR

The poor are not a homogeneous reality: there are in fact at least three different layers:

- a) **"Those that are assisted with some degree of continuity by public institutions;**
- b) **The non-resident poor excluded or self-excluded from continuous welfare, such as old and new homeless people, eradicates, etc.;**
- c) **The nomads of poverty: those that have no fixed relationships with the town, linked to group cultures such as gypsies and coloured people.**

A first comment is that public welfare does reach into the first group, even though the most needy are not always to be found here. **Public welfare and poverty**

It might be said that public welfare, with some degree of continuity, is preferably addressed to ascertained residents, qualified according to income, starting from a minimum threshold that is determined administratively" (Ardigò).

The other two swathes are on the whole the object of emergency intervention on the part of government institutions. But what is missing is a continuous operation throughout the national territory, right at the sites of poverty. It is preferable, in fact, to wait for the "customer" (the destitute) to get to the office where the official managing the public welfare is sitting.

THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY SERVICE

In this context, voluntary service has a task of solidarity, it must be akin to a critical conscience by operating not only post facto but with a view to "prevention".

"Every expression of voluntary service, therefore, cannot but question the desired model of society, the presence of poverty and of marginalization within the territory and the significance which its very presence has in relation to the model of society and to the overcoming of the conditions of poverty and of marginalization" (Pasini). **The model of society for which voluntary service is striving**

While it carries out its functions as a social operator, it is a critical conscience and it thus wishes to become, at one, a political subject, the State's direct interlocutor and the legitimate representative of those that have no voice, in those places (see Budget Law) where the assignment of resources is decided. **Voluntary service as a political subject**

The change in the current situation, together with an attempt to forestall the causes of the hardship, would therefore appear to be a duty for voluntary service that cannot be postponed, since it faces a commitment of solidarity and increased awareness of society with the object of "forcing" a real change in the institutions.

In the meantime organized voluntary service claims for itself a political role to be exercised in institutional places to defend the marginal parts of society who risk having no voice and no representation.

**Voluntary
service as the
representative
of marginal
parts of society**

Quotations are taken from: (various authors) **"IL FORMEZ A LUCCA"** (Formez in Lucca) in "Voluntary Service Notes", No. 4, edited by the Centre for Professional Training and Studies of Formez.

MAIN REPORTS

"Introduzione al Convegno" (An Introduction to the Convention) (**M.E. Martini**);

"Povertà e marginalità: dati fenomenici e riflessioni sulle cause" (Poverty and Marginality: Figures and Reflections on the Causes) (**G. Sarpellon**);

"L'apporto del volontariato come solidarietà e coscienza critica, nell'ottica della prevenzione" (The Contribution of Voluntary Service as a Solidarity and Critical Conscience, in the Light of Prevention) (**G. Pasini**);

"Esempi di ricerche sulla povertà a livello locale" (Examples of Studies on Poverty at the Local Level) (**A. Ardigò**);

"Le povertà del mezzogiorno" (Poverty in the South of Italy) (**S. Zoppi**).

THE SIXTH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF STUDIES ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE FROM THE DUTIES OF SOLIDARITY TO THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE: VOLUNTARY SERVICE AND MASS MEDIA

Lucca, 1990

Why hold the Convention

The convention was born from the considerations that the associations and the groups were making in relation to the problems derived from the relationships with the world of information. In particular, the debate centred on the following points: (a) voluntary service in the world of information, that is, as a subject that was barely «newsworthy»; (b) organized voluntary service that manages organs of information; (c) voluntary service in the information world, that is those that participate voluntarily in the management of instruments of communication (radio and television stations, etc.).

The commitment of the National Centre for Voluntary Service has thus concentrated on attempting to bring this growing phenomenon to light, to ensure a higher degree of awareness to this patrimony of energies and motivations, while, at the same time, trying to unveil the cultural model on which voluntary service is based. Over these years, we have in fact seen that there has been a substantial change in attitude to voluntary service: from a simple subject of study that the Lucca Conventions have highlighted in its potentials, to a true political subject (see the 1988 Lucca Convention) capable of considering the evils of society, on the forms of solidarity that have been activated and that can be activated, on the behaviour required on the part of citizens who intend to shoulder their own social responsibilities.

It is for this reason that voluntary service remains a social protagonist well beyond the attention it captures in the mass media and even if «nobody talks about it in the daily news columns».

A social actor that has taken upon itself the solidarity duty mentioned in art. 2 of our Constitution. In fact, it has assimilated in the deepest way the values that have formed our Constitution; a Constitution, the Italian one, that does not want simply to draw «an administered society», but that also wants to propose a model of social cohabitation in which every guaranteed liberty corresponds, in the same way, to an assumption of responsibility. This with the object of producing social

**The reflection
of voluntary
service on
information**

**Voluntary
service as a
social
protagonist**

subjects, protagonists, that can properly give their contribution to the construction of a state entity that does not represent merely a subject that provides services, with the citizens as users, but that really responds to the sum of the social forces in play, of their cultural heritage and of their activities» (Mirabelli).

Certainly, if it is easy to see that voluntary service has grown over these years and has acquired a greater awareness of its role, the same cannot be said of society as a whole; in fact, «if, over these years, the experiences of voluntary service have grown increasingly stronger in quality and quantity, this is due mostly to personal communication, based on individual word of mouth, on door-to-door contacts». However, «if the phenomenon has had this development, in spite of the entirely craftsman-like means it has used, it is a sign that the message does have within itself an extraordinary mobilizing power of communication. But it is difficult to understand how a social fact of these proportions can, to a great extent, have escaped, on a day-to-day basis, the channels of mass communications». (...)

«In a society in which it is information that increasingly establishes what has a right to existence and what does not, the voluntary service operator appears to constitute a macroscopic exception, since he (or she) is born and has grown outside the mass-media limelight» (Martini).

**Voluntary
service: an
extraordinary
ability to
communicate**

**Macroscopic
exception**

The Convention as a moment of meeting, exchange and verification

Certainly, this national meeting has been useful in bringing to light the most significant experiences that voluntary service, in its organised forms, is going through in the information sector. In this respect, it is possible to mention the press agencies, from the well-tested ASPE to the more recently born RES, together with, naturally, all those periodicals, expressions of voluntary service groups, that by now do represent small information universe of which an outstanding representation is given in the CNV publication «Il Villaggio Solidale» (The Sympathetic Village) by Ruggero Valentini.

Next to the print sector, the strong experiences through which radio information has been going must not be undervalued; some 450 radio stations of Roman Catholic extraction, mostly community operated, with a large number of voluntary operators: in 97% of radio stations voluntary operators provide their contribution, while in no less than 70% of case volunteers actually manage them on their own (census co-ordinated by CORALLO and presented to the Conference of Italian RC Bishops).

Such composite realities, so diversified in their lines of inspiration, a fundamental value for the variegated world of voluntary service operators, have expressed a common desire during the stages of group work: the opening of a continuous dialogue between these different subjects of communication.

Indeed, it has been the convention itself, an important moment of contact

**Press agencies
and voluntary
service
periodicals**

**Community-
operated radio
stations**

**The need to
open a
communication
channel
between
reporters and
voluntary
service
operators**

between professional reporters, operators of the large communication organs and editors of voluntary service newspapers, that has highlighted the need of more constant relationship between these two information worlds. Reciprocal dialogue is desirable for all but, up to now, appropriate instruments to encourage it have not been found.

Beyond possible specific paths, common training courses where newspapers reporter could share their experiences with voluntary service operators, to enhance the degree of understanding between these subjects of the information world, precisely so that these experiences need not remain isolated episodes, the importance has been highlighted of the National Federation of Voluntary Social Service Periodicals (Groups No. 2, No. 4, No. 5), a reliable response for training and representative needs that have frequently been voiced by the editors of voluntary service periodicals.

In fact, the Federation, promoted by the National Centre for Voluntary Service, and introduced during the Convention by its Chairman, Ruggero Valentini, does by now represent a reality which it is no longer possible to put to one side if we want to provide a precise frame of reference for the ability of voluntary service to organise itself and to have a strong incidence in the information world. Of course, it is not enough to put information professionals in touch with the voluntary service operators; just as it is not enough, in the mass media organs, simply to expand the space assigned to the themes of marginalization and, as a consequence, to those groups of volunteers who operate in this context (among other things, "this operation could well respond to a simple assessment of commercial marketing in view of the millions of people that are engaged on a daily basis in voluntary service work") (Del Colle).

It cannot all be reduced to this.

There is, in fact, a more serious problem that consists in "highlighting the close interdependence that binds, and will increasingly bind, the development of mass communications with the growth of a social responsibility, capable of commitments that are not merely temporary. Those engaged in "making" the news must understand that whatever news is transmitted is destined to have a social fall-out from which it is not possible to be extraneous by hiding behind a pure and simple right to the news". "And, on the other side, those that are committed to a voluntary service activity must be convinced that the high degree of interdependence of our society will not allow anyone to cut out small and possibly gratifying niches away from the responsibilities of public communications" (Martini).

There is indeed an actual duty to communicate, to be seen, because, paradoxically, only those things that are actually seen exist in this society. "To talk about some problems, being the depositories of important experiences, of real design abilities, and not to become visible, not to propose them to a public that is wider than the mere insiders, at this point in time, is

**Federation of
Voluntary
Social Service
Periodicals**

**Close
interdependence
between mass
communication
and the growth
of a sympathetic
responsibility**

**The duty to
communicate**

indeed a dereliction of duty" (Colombo).

Thus, in the case of voluntary service, precisely in view of the importance that it has assumed as a social force, visibility intended as awareness on the part of an increasingly large slice of society, is a true and much-felt duty and an unrenounceable need from which it is not possible to back off without betraying those ideals of social change that are basic to its actions. "It is essential, at this point, that voluntary service live out its action of solidarity as a fact of communication: voluntary service must try to find communications to give a voice to those that have none" (Gastaldi).

Once it is established that by now communication represents a duty for voluntary service groups, it is at this point necessary to ensure that this duty can be carried out by those who wish to do so; it is, in sum, necessary to allow everyone to communicate, so that what is ethically desirable can go beyond a statement of intent and become also an inalienable right.

The right to communicate

This is the heart of the entire problem: no legislative measure exists to this day that protects and promotes the right to communicate.

"It is true that, during the summer, an important law has been enacted, No. 241/90 whose content is certainly to be highlighted, on the reform of the administrative process, extending the right of access on the part of citizens and their to administrative acts" (Jervolino). This can be seen as a means of facilitating communications between the State, the so-called intermediate bodies, the citizens, to make increasingly transparent the relationships between institutions and the citizenry; but this is not enough.

It is also significant that, quite recently, the press has felt "the necessity of blending the need of the immediacy of the news with a respect for some values, thus advancing initiatives targeted on the definition of self-governing codes of conduct" (Jervolino). But even this is not enough to tackle the heart of the problem.

Now is it even sufficient to provide room for the themes of solidarity in the news or, on the part of reporters, to respect a charter of rights that may improve the contents of "wide-ranging information".

First of all, the principle that is to be defended is the fundamental one of the right to communicate that cannot be impaired or mutilated, rather, it should be protected and guaranteed. In this view, the hypothesis has been put forward of a law to encourage the production of information on the part of a multiplicity of subjects and in this perspective we must note the enormous potential that is built into the Federation of Voluntary Social Service Periodicals; in fact, as a political subject capable of representing marginalized groups of people, organised voluntary service is, through this federative experiment, attempting to represent the wish of associations and movements to respond with

**There is no law
to promote the
right to
communicate**

**The charter of
duties**

**The right to
communicate**

organized initiatives to the pressing demands for communication rising from "the bottom up".

The right to communicate, that is, the possibility of producing information without belonging to financial potentates, has found a first significant response in this federation. In fact, twenty of the more important publications of the social sector have already joined forces in it, as an expression of voluntary service groups that live on a daily basis in contact with the problems of the last ones.

Their sensitivity, their attempt to arrive at an understanding of the causes of their problems, their objective of a change in social structures, have been at the origin of this federative experience that is meeting important forms of consensus.

Among these, the significant support of the reporters of the "Fiesole Group", ready indeed in seeing the connection between the right to information and the growth of a sympathetic society.

Together, the Federation of Periodicals and the Fiesole Group (also sensitive to a moralisation of information where the right to privacy and the right of response constitute fundamental points), have drawn up a document mentioning the opening of an "information dispute" whose main point is a law proposal on the publishing industry that, through specific grants and tax exemptions, can effectively encourage the possibility on the part of non-profit associations to enter with an active role the circuits of information-making.

To give a voice to voluntary service as well as to similar expressions of society does, in fact, mean coming into contact with the problems of the last ones in their most complete and true dimension; it is thus an unrenounceable need, if we really want to attempt the building of a "sympathetic village", where interdependence and complexity of problems find a common ground.

Rapporteurs mentioned:

Maria Eletta Martini, Chairman of CNV;
Fausto Colombo, Sacred Heart Catholic University, Milan;
Cesare Mirabelli, former Deputy Chairman
of the Magistrates' Superior Council;
Beppe Del Colle, editorial writer "Famiglia Cristiana";
Enrico Gastaldi, a manager of the Italian State Broadcasting Corporation
Rosa Russo Jervolino, Minister for Social Affairs

**To produce
information
without
belonging to
financial and
political
potentates**

**Information
disputes and
the law on the
publishing
industry**

**The
sympathetic
village**

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Printed in January 1992

Grafica Luigi Monti
Via Legnani, 4 - 21047 Saronno (VA)

Cover: studio grafico Schizzi - Saronno

