

Points of View

National Service

Partnership Brings Strength

By Eli J. Segal

"National service, I hope and pray, will help us to strengthen the cords that bind us together as a people, will help us to remember in the quiet of every night that what each of us can become is to some extent determined by whether all of us can become what God meant us to be."—
President Bill Clinton



Eli Segal is the president and chief executive officer of the Corporation for National Service.

I share the President's vision of what national service can accomplish for our citizens and our communities.

But what if I didn't?

If I didn't, I'd probably have a lot of questions about this new idea. I'd wonder how it was going to be put into action. I'd wonder if a full-time service program

would threaten volunteerism in America and, even more importantly, if rewarding those who serve would change the very ethic of neighbor helping neighbor. I'd have a lot of questions. And I'd want someone in Washington to answer them.

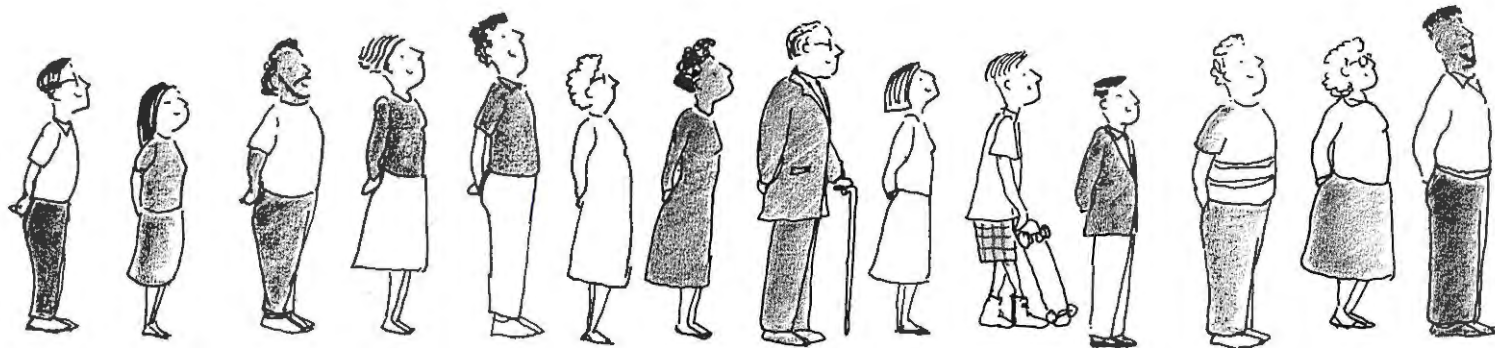
Let me try here, then, to provide some answers.

National service, as *Leadership* readers know, is *not* a new idea; it's as old as America itself. From the volunteer associations of the early 1900s to the Depression era Civilian Conservation Corps to the Peace Corps, Americans have always been prepared to serve their country.

The programs which came under the leadership of the new Corporation for National Service last September were already doing great things for American communities. VISTA volunteers had been serving in low-income communities throughout the country for almost 30 years. The National Senior Service Corps

involved nearly half a million older Americans in giving over 100 million hours of their time and resources every year. In its first year of existence, the Commission on National and Community Service created the Learn and Serve America programs, which offer service opportunities to thousands of kindergarten through college-age students. In addition, the Commission supported youth corps and national service demonstration programs across the country. The Corporation will channel scarce federal resources into these and other community-based service programs.

At the center of the Corporation's efforts will be the President's new national service program, AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps will utilize our nation's most valuable resource: the energy and creativity of our people. By the end of this year, AmeriCorps members of all ages and backgrounds will be getting things



done in our communities through direct service that addresses our nation's most pressing needs.

This year, we will also launch the National Civilian Community Corps, a national service program to be located on military bases, staffed with retired military officers and, like its CCC ancestor, with an environmental focus. And we will fund and support The Points of Light Foundation as it continues to support and reward volunteer efforts nationwide.

The partnership between Points of Light and the Corporation is a vital part of the national service vision. This is not mere rhetoric; we know that we cannot succeed unless we work in full partnership with the 94 million Americans who volunteer their time and talents every year, and with the thousands of public and private organizations which support them. We are committed to doing so.

Our new partnership will help give Americans of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to serve their country. But this is just the beginning. Beyond forging new partnerships, beyond creating a new mechanism for strengthening American communities, the Corporation will foster a new national ethic of service.

My alter ego might wonder, at this point, if this "new national ethic" is not the very thing he was concerned about. That is: Doesn't a program which rewards service weaken the spirit of altruism that has traditionally driven the concept of service?

The answer is no. First, national service is a limited program. It is not, and never will be, an entitlement. We will begin with roughly 20,000 AmeriCorps participants—big enough to achieve real results in our communities but by no means so big as to undermine the operations of the

already existing field.

Second, you will determine who this talent will be, and how it will be used. Nonprofit programs selected for AmeriCorps will do their own recruiting. It will be up to you to make sure that our common goals for service are achieved.

And, finally, national service will have a ripple effect. It will encourage service of all kinds, including those in which government plays no direct role. National service will celebrate the truth of Dr. Martin Luther King's assertion that "Everyone can be great because everyone can serve."

President Clinton described a

new national ethic in his inaugural address, when he challenged the American people to "seasons of service"—to a commitment which, like the seasons, would both vary and endure.

AmeriCorps exemplifies that ethic. But while AmeriCorps can help rebuild the American community, it cannot do so alone. That is why your leadership is so important.

The Corporation is proud to join The Points of Light Foundation in this partnership for change. We look forward to working with you to help shape our communities and, with them, our common future. ■

Preparing for Global Citizenship

By Dr. Leroy Keith

Today's students, perhaps unlike any other generation before them, are witnesses to daily developments in the shaping of a new national agenda



Dr. Leroy Keith is the president of Morehouse College.

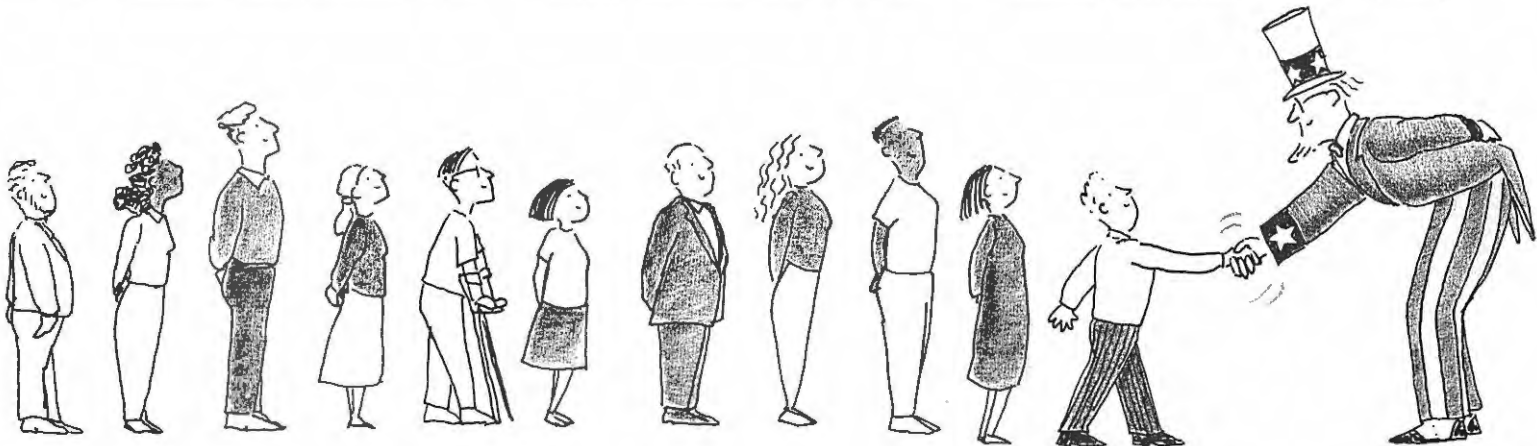
responsibility and environmental integrity issues are emerging as

within a quickly expanding context of a new world order. Perhaps most significant is the recurrence of common themes in the news from our own neighborhoods and the news from abroad: human rights, corporate

universal concerns, and are neither foreign nor abstract to students today.

Now more than ever, institutions of higher education must provide ample opportunities for our students' explorations of their multi-dimensional roles as citizens of a global society. The educational process involved in the development of leaders for tomorrow's world must underscore each student's responsibility as a contributing member of his local, regional, national and international communities.

President Clinton's national service initiative has truly become more than a call to service; it has become a strategic, programmatic movement, a catalyst to encourage, recruit, train and reward our young



people for community service participation. The National Community Service Trust Act of 1993 provides the administrative framework and funding to allow institutions of higher education to become integral participants in this initiative in two effective ways: (1) Colleges may apply for and receive grants for developing community service programs and for training teachers in community service teaching and learning methods, and (2) students involved in approved service activities are eligible to receive up to \$5,000 in education awards, applicable to tuition costs and/or to outstanding student loan obligations.

These two key, complementary components maximize our opportunity to create service programs that address concerns within our respective communities, and to mobilize our students for participation in grassroots service efforts. I contend that both of these efforts are well suited to the college community, and enhance our collective role in developing an active, involved and committed citizenry for the next generation. This has, indeed, always been the goal of higher education.

The concept that undergirds the National and Community Service Trust Act is an exciting concept on its own merits. Through the Corporation for National Service and Americorps, as many as 20,000 young people nationwide will be active participants in service projects between June 1994 and June 1995! These numbers will grow exponentially, creating a lasting legacy. But, in my opinion, the significance of President Clinton's initiative is greatly enhanced when consideration is given to the number of students nationwide for whom a college education will become more accessible.

While I cannot speak for all of my colleagues in academia, I would daresay that a vast majority of us have deliberated on the closely related issues of escalating costs in the provision of a quality educational experience for our students and the effects of tuition increases on student recruitment and retention. For most of us, there is a widening gap between tuition fees and the availability of institutional, state and federal financial assistance for students—with serious implications for those

talented, financially needy young people whose accessibility to our institutions is becoming threatened.

From my perspective, the National and Community Service Trust Act will enable and encourage access to institutions of higher education, while providing students with significant involvement in existing, local service initiatives. Our colleges will become conduits for the development of civic-minded citizens, marshalling our country's young people to address the most urgent issues facing our communities.

As president of an institution whose mission has included, since 1867, the goal of producing community-spirited students in preparation for leadership in the global society, I look forward to expanding the capabilities of our Office of Community Service, to maximizing our institution's contributions to community service programs in the Atlanta area, and to bearing witness to the enhancement of our students' academic, personal and professional capabilities through community service involvement. ■