

WHY THE U.S. DOES NOT NEED A "PEACE" INSTITUTE

As the Reagan Administration and the Congress take a harder look at the federal budget for possible cuts, they should pay particular attention to marginal new programs, destined only to grow in size and irrelevance in the years ahead. A prime candidate for pruning from the federal budget should be a new organization called the U.S. Peace Institute. Neither the White House, the Office of Management and Budget, nor the Defense, State, or Education departments supported creation of this new federal bureaucracy. But Congress decided to go with it anyway, mainly as a farewell "gift" to its longtime advocate, Senator Jennings Randolph (D-WV) who is retiring after 52 years in Congress.

By creating the Institute, Congress appears to be attempting to institutionalize "peace." Initially, Congress appropriated \$4 million in start-up costs for the U.S. Peace Institute. At the same time, four times this amount was authorized for ultimate outlays in the Institute's first year. The program's costs can only go upward from there if it is not stopped now. The Institute actually was attached by Congress to the Pentagon budget; if eliminated, it would have absolutely no adverse impact on U.S. security.

No other area of Pentagon spending could involve as much wasteful duplication of funding as channeling millions of dollars into additional research on so-called peace studies and the arts of negotiation. Already, hundreds of universities and dozens of research institutes devote enormous resources to studies focusing on conflict resolution. The American Bar Association calculates, in fact, that in 1983 there were 43 law schools alone that had programs in negotiation and arbitration.

University curricula in International Relations, too, necessarily entail programs that parallel anything that could be labeled "peace studies." Moreover, institutions that take a sophisticated multidisciplinary approach to the problems of international relations are bound to deal much more effectively with conflict resolution than can any contrived program that presumes to know how to achieve a peaceful world.

The question of the Peace Institute was never debated seriously in Congress's rush to adjourn before the elections this fall. Thus, a coherent case was never made that outlined precisely what a U.S. Peace Institute would do that is not already covered as an integral element of existing academic or research institution programs, many of which receive direct and indirect government support. In fact, the Institute would spend about one-fourth of its funds in grants that would expand existing programs.

What debate there was mainly invoked the seemingly simple but vastly misleading proposition that, because the U.S. has four separate military academies, equity and balance require that the government also fund a peace academy. The argument seems to ignore the central fact that study at the military academies focuses on how peace can be assured. Conflict resolution, too, is an important part of the work of the military academies.

The argument for a new peace program implies that no government resources are devoted to peace and conflict resolution. This overlooks the essence of the State Department's work, particularly the role of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), which was created in 1961 specifically to pursue and coordinate research and disseminate information concerning arms control. In addition, the Department of Education will grant \$12 million this year to National Resource Centers for projects that include "international studies."

The creation of the U.S. Peace Institute thus reflects a costly and misguided notion that, by allocating funds for "worthwhile" purposes, their realization somehow will be accelerated. Spending several million dollars to study "peace" is just as likely to lead to unrealistic and dangerous expectations of what negotiations can accomplish.

A recent detailed examination of "peace studies" in the United Kingdom indicates that, rather than promoting peace, they simply led to widespread misconceptions about the Soviet Union and East-West relations. Insofar as peace studies are based on wish fulfillment, they can actually sow the seeds of conflict rather than peace. Clearly, Britain's appeasement policy in the 1930s reflected the same sort of blind promotion of peace, and the outcome was World War II. In short, spending additional money in the name of peace needlessly duplicates existing academic programs and is almost certain to be counterproductive.

Jeffrey B. Gayner
Counselor for International Affairs

For further information:

Caroline Cox and Roger Scruton, "Peace Studies: A Critical Survey," Institute for European Defense and Strategic Studies, London, England, 1984.

"Omnibus Defense Authorization, 1985," Congressional Record, June 20, 1984, S7785-7816.

Jeffrey A. Sheehan, "The Peace Academy," Heritage Foundation Issue Bulletin No. 81, April 15, 1982.