

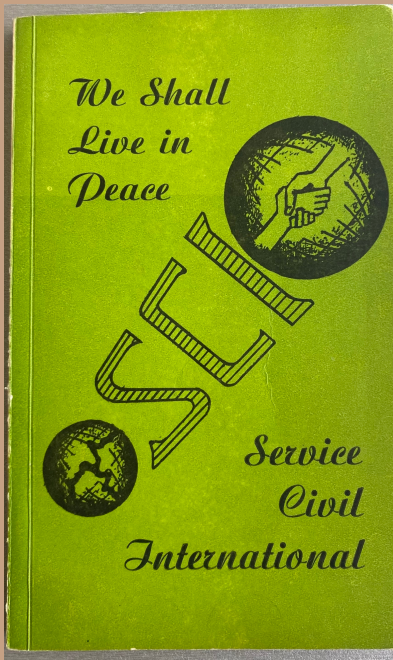
Pioneers of Global Citizenship: an early international volunteer movement

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Summary of research:

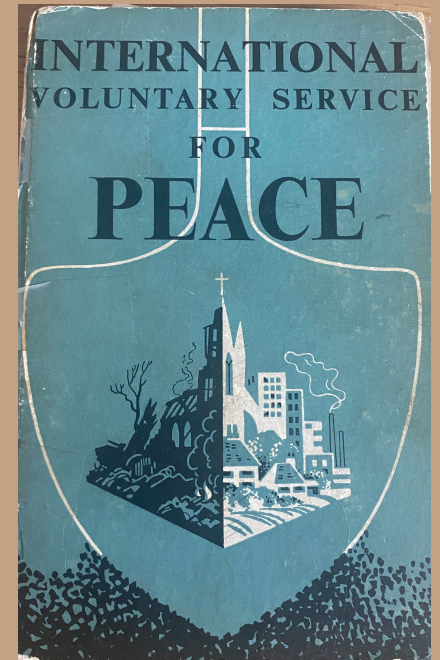
This research is part of an investigation into the largely underutilised archival materials and online resources pertaining to the history of the Service Civil International (est. 1920) and its British branch, the International Voluntary Service (est. 1931). I acquired an understanding of the key features of these organisations, their aims, values and achievements through this research. The focal points of this historical study are, however, surrounding the following themes: the idea of global citizenship, the movement's connection to Leeds and the University, and a case study on its involvement in Northern Ireland during 'the Troubles'.

Main sources (dated 1920s-90s) found in:
Hull History Centre and Leeds University
Library's Special Collections!



First British project at Brynmawr, Wales, 1931. (Credit: IVS website)

"DEEDS NOT WORDS"



Early global citizens for peace:

Primary and secondary source materials show that at the movement's origins and beyond, the SCI was inspired by the values of its founder, a Swiss conscientious objector, Pierre Cérésole. International groups of volunteers were to get involved in a broad range of activities, with few geographical limits. The movement wanted to establish war as a moral impossibility and to spread feelings of mutual help and international understanding through the experience of constructive workcamps. Division was discouraged. The IVS also wanted to establish civilian, constructive service as a viable alternative to military service in war times. The movement can be seen as a watershed of global citizenship and self-identification with causes abroad.

Links to Leeds:

Both Leeds and the University of Leeds were significant in the origins of the Service Civil International's British branch, the International Voluntary Service. Jean Inebnit, leader of the IVS and close friend of Pierre Cérésole, worked as a French lecturer for the University. A wealth of Jean's miscellaneous notes is held in the library's Special Collections. There is evidence of Leeds University student volunteers supporting the movement from as early as 1928. The IVS headquarters were based in a house in Lyddon Terrace. Projects and workcamps continued in Leeds for the rest of the century. For example, a range of work was carried out in Chapeltown in 1973. Former Vice-Chancellor Edward Boyle was, for a period starting from 1966, a Vice President of the IVS. This further reflects the University's connection to the movement.

Northern Ireland: A case study

The IVS's actions in Northern Ireland were arguably an extension of the movement's core values and aims. While the conflict there progressed and divisions worsened between Catholic and Protestant communities, the IVS ran holidays for disadvantaged children from each side of the divide. Children were taken abroad, and they were taught about the views of 'the other side'. Tragically, the IVS NI Field Officer, Sean Armstrong was shot dead in June 1973 by a loyalist paramilitary. Sean was falsely perceived as a 'spy' in the conflict. Despite this, the movement persisted and the cause for peace carried on. A permanent holiday home was set up in Glebe House, County Down. The movement's actions in Northern Ireland are reflective of the values that had inspired and continued to inspire them in other parts of the world.