



In recent years, we have seen the appearance in this country of various "peace" groups, that is, groups which have lobbied for disarmament and for halting bomb testing. Motivation for these groups has been highly variable. Some of them have been offshoots of religious groups (the Quakers); others are composed of scientists who feel that their special background can help the cause of peace. These groups have carried out their campaigns similarly, by passing petitions, picketing, holding rallies, meetings, and seminars, and putting out pamphlets and newspapers.

Now, peace groups are nothing new--they have existed at least as long as Ugh brained Oof with a piece of stone in front of a cave in the good old days. But rarely have such groups received so much publicity or study as today: it is almost fashionable to belong to such a group. Some of these peace groups consist of iconoclasts or mere dissidents of current society or policy; they owe their existence not to the issues at stake, which are of tremendous importance to the future of man on this planet, but to mere dissatisfaction with one or another aspect of current life. I have often wondered whether this protest is effective and, even more important, whether it is the best that can be done.

Recently I became interested in such a group in the Bay Area, and almost as quickly became uninterested. My reasons were simple: I just didn't feel that this group (and others in general) could effectively modify the policy of the U.S. government. Note the word effective which I stress, for although I agree with the cause of these peace groups, I cannot agree with their method, for the essential problem rests with our foreign policy advisers and makers, and the methods utilized by the peace groups do not seem to be aimed at modifying this policy. At least, not effectively.

It has been pointed out to me that President John F. Kennedy wrote a most informative honor thesis when he graduated from Harvard. Kennedy, then 20, had analyzed the influence of peace movements between the first and second world wars, and had shown how they were responsible for the general unpreparedness of England and other Western European countries prior to the second world war. Chamberlain and Henderson were not diplomats who followed a policy of appeasement in isolation; they were a product of a political philosophy which was strongly influenced by the peace movements which existed at the time. A close reading of this thesis would suggest therefore that Kennedy, years ago, had already come to the conclusion that peace movements could be very influential and dangerous.

Thus, it would seem that the mere application of protest would fall on deaf ears, for it is inconceivable to me that the President would forget the results of this careful analysis which he made years ago. On the other hand there are some people who would have you believe that advocates of peace (whatever that may mean) such as Amiat Etzioni, Eric Fromm, and Stuart Hughes are ignored completely by our foreign policy advisers. Actually this is doubtful; as advocates of a position which must interest our State Department, they are listened to, and may even influence some course of action. These people act as a sort of lobby for peace; unfortunately, the problems of peace are not like the problems of sugar quotas, and the lobby for peace is quite ineffectual when compared to the sugar lobby. The latter has studied its problem carefully, deciding what it wants, who to influence, how to influence these people, and then proceeded to do so. But the peace lobby has done no such homework; instead it has concentrated upon working out the strategies of peace (see The Liberal Papers for some fine reading in this field), and tried very simply to present their reasoning to our foreign policy advisers. By and large they've failed, for the question of how and who should be influenced is at least as great a problem as the direction of the influence.

It seems to me that peace groups in this country should first learn the most important lesson: if you want to influence somebody, learn how to do it first. It should



be obvious to these groups that the mere application of protest will not work, for in the eyes of Mr Kennedy, and presumably his foreign policy advisers, such protest can lead to a very dangerous situation. Research work on the methods of lobbying are, however, very scarce. And it is here where the professional scientists can best help the cause of peace. I suggest that such professional groups start collecting data on the method of lobbying. This would entail collecting data on people who are influenced and how influence is applied. What we need in effect is a science of how to influence people.

Then, and only then, could proper pressure be put upon our responsible (?) officials in our government in the cause of peace. Data could be collected about our officials, data on their personality, their likes, dislikes, and the statements they've made. These dossiers could then be carefully studied and information extracted from them which would be given to people who knew how to use such information to influence their viewpoint. In this way, carefully worked-out strategies of peace could be communicated to the government in the most effective manner.

There are problems here, there is no doubt about it. Such a project would depend upon (1) the adequacy of present psychological techniques which, I must admit, is open to a great deal of question, (2) the immensity of the project, which would involve many hundreds of dossiers and many thousands of man-hours, and (3) the sure alarm which such a project would cause among our Federal police. Nevertheless, I feel that such an attempt must be made.

I realize that this project is not new from me, that I have read about such an idea before. About 20 years ago, a science fiction writer wrote a series of stories about something which he called "psychohistory," the idea that history can be influenced by a close attention to its trends and to the people who made it or influenced it, the idea that history could be influenced by subtly conceived influences here and there, and that this influence was a psychological phenomena. Somehow, it seems to me that what I have just proposed is exactly the same thing, albeit on a smaller scale. Yet today the real danger is as great on this planet as the imaginary danger was in the galaxy of the future.

What now, Mr Asimov?