

Bridges of Understanding

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The sixties have been claimed by world ranking economists as the decade in which the human race has had the highest standard of living. We are informed that the sixties have heralded an era of plenty. The developed countries of the world are enjoying the best that money can buy, in the developing countries the earnings of the people are growing and even in the under-developed countries there is a spiral of inflation which is a pointer towards more money in the hands of people and not enough things to buy.

Why is it then that in this state of affluence, the sixties have a very different story to tell vis-à-vis the relations between nations of the world?

The end of the Second World War and the creation of the United Nations gave one a feeling that an era of peace was about to dawn; but the position as it stands today shows a different picture, for more nations are at strife now than at any time prior to the beginning of the Second World War.

Historians have at many times tried to explain such differences between nations as the desire of politicians and national leaders for grasping more power or more territory or inflicting on peoples of other lands their way of life. How can such a statement be true in the vortex of things as they stand today? Every country in the world however small is prospering and hoping for an era of plenty. Who can then dream of coveting other's possessions?

Dr Smiley Blanton, a very noted Psychiatrist says: "The key to many a human problem is caused by the simple failure of people to make contact with each other." How true is this statement, if applied, in relation to nations?

Many a time we have come across individuals who have a puzzled outlook on life and many a time our friends have told us: "I can't get through to him." How many times have we heard a parent say about a child: "I talked my hat off, but my son does not listen" How true are the above statements in relation to nations?

Misunderstanding, suspicion and fear the causes which lead to international strife, to differences between neighbouring countries and to a desire to covet things which do not belong to one.

The simplest remedy to a situation of this nature is the simple adage of "communication" and communication between the leaders of nations under the clouds of strife and suspicion is impossible; but on a people-to-

people basis, communication between individuals who have a firm desire for the good of mankind, can make this era of plenty an era of peace as well. If this is the ardent desire of a few individuals and if they in turn were to live up to their obligations of communicating their thoughts and their thinking, the day is not very far off when the neglected language of communication may be the answer to wipe out suspicion between nations around the world.

An organization like Lions International can play a tremendous part in this desire of the peoples of the world to communicate not by words alone but by actions. In the last few decades, we have persuaded ourselves that there is something dubious, weak or wrong about showing a hand of friendship or providing a helping hand. We pride ourselves of our restraint, our well thought of verbal and written communications, which actually only help to isolate ourselves. Qualities like humility and tenderness cannot enter when nations deal with each other; only a cold impersonal approach is possible between nations; but the minute individuals deal with each other whether they belong to one nation or the other, the possibility however, remote of the use of humility and tenderness is always there. Gratitude, a most essential quality, can only be understood in relations between individuals but will be totally non-existent in relations between nations. Individuals are prepared to accept that a good turn is and can be done for the sake of doing good, whereas nations would accept help always with the feeling that the giving nation has an ulterior purpose.

We would like to doff our hats for the wonderful communication which exists today between the people of several countries of the world and in this understanding the Lions of those countries have played a prominent role. Lionism in its own way has built many a bridge of understanding from Los Angeles to Manila from Chicago to Sydney, from Miami to Nice, from New York to Bombay and hundreds of others, as can be witnessed by very fine service activities of an international nature which span all the Continents of the globe. These and many others are ideal examples of international understanding possible through a people-to people desire to understand each other's problems and lend a helping hand.

These bridges of understanding convey to men thousands of miles across oceans, the feeling of concern and love and can certainly ease pain and frustration and can give mankind its humanity.