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The Grail Movement

A Position Paper on Inter-American Collaboration

Eileen M. Schaeffler

For almost fifteen years the international Grail Movement has been in a process of evolution in Latin America — with Brazil as the primary focus.

The shape of our efforts there has been conditioned by the development of the countries themselves and of our insights regarding them. We present the following article by Miss Kathleen Walsh (Grail member who served for five years in Brazil and is currently studying for her Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of Wisconsin) in an attempt to clarify the premises which underlie our changes of policy regarding inter-American collaboration. Our movement remains open to cooperation with other Church and secular agencies operating on different premises. In the practical order, the forms of that cooperation will, of course, be affected by our view of our particular contribution. We of the Grail Movement who have worked in Brazil and have also been involved in programs with Latin American students in the United States focus the Latin American situation and the co-operative role of Americans there in the following way:

Events in Latin America, both of crisis and development, point to the complexity of problems and the diversity of situations and stages of development in the various Latin American countries. Certainly there is a basic similarity of problems in the several countries produced by underdevelopment and the rigidity of political and socio-economic structures which relegate the masses of the people to the fringe of society. But the historical framework in

which these problems have evolved has been unique to each country. Variations also are the degrees of success achieved by those countries which have confronted their basic "reality" and taken serious measures to cope with it. This complexity of the Latin American panorama strongly indicates the basic need of indigenous Latin American initiative and leadership in dealing with problems of development in the spheres of both "world" and Church. Certain groups of mature Latin American Christians have increasingly seen their role as necessarily involved in the revolutionary kind of activity needed for the "humanization" of structures in order that these structures will aid instead of inhibit the masses in the attainment of the basic requirements for a human existence. It is the kind of activity which challenges particularly the layman who can bring his professional and technical training to bear within institutions: government, etc. These nuclei of Christian leaders feel strongly that they cannot work as an isolated group, but that their very Christian vocation impels them to join hands with whatever other groups in Latin American society sincerely dedicated to bringing about the needed changes.

From twelve years experience of sending Americans to Latin America, from our mistakes, failures and successes, we of the Grail might sum up our convictions about the role of the American lay apostle in Latin America in the following way:

1. That the most important and fundamental problems in Latin America can only be adequately confronted by Latin Americans themselves who have an intimate knowledge of their own people and their countries' situations. Those who come from abroad must be ready to function in an auxiliary capacity and should particularly seek to cooperate with those Latin Americans most committed to the necessary changes.

2. If we from abroad want to be of authentic help, there must be enough vision and openness to participate in some existent over-all plan or structure established by indigenous leaders instead of acting on the fringe of such plans in some "good works" of our own choosing. If Americans are really to serve and not hinder, the future direction of the U.S. lay apostolate in Latin America should be outlined by those mature responsible Latin Americans, both clergy and lay, who are fully involved in a work of renewal in their own countries.
3. That the emphasis should be more on sending specialists rather than greater numbers of U.S. lay persons to Latin America. If we are to work in an auxiliary capacity and to find our places within some kind of government

or diocesan plan of development, we cannot be absorbed in large numbers. For an effective contribution, those from overseas should be equipped with some specific professional or technical skill that is needed and desired by Latin Americans.

With a specialization as a basis, the kind of Americans needed in Latin America are those who have a sensitivity for and an adaptability to another culture, mature enough not to become crushed or aggressive when confronted with keen anti-Americanism, and who are capable of entering into dialogue and of having a true human exchange with their Latin American counterparts.

Miss Schaeffler is a past president of The Grail Movement in North America. This Paper is published here with permission.

For the Mission Minded...

THE FIFTH ANNUAL NATIONAL CATHOLIC INTER-AMERICAN COOPERATION PROGRAM (CICOP) CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD FROM JANUARY 29-31, 1968 AT THE CHASE-PARK PLAZA HOTEL IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI.

THE THEME FOR THE 1968 CICOP CONFERENCE WILL BE CULTURAL FACTORS IN INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIPS: BOND OR BARRIER. THE THREE-DAY SESSION WILL FEATURE SPEAKERS AND DELEGATES FROM THE MAJORITY OF LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES. IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT ATTENDANCE AT CICOP 1968 WILL EXCEED THE 3,000 PARTICIPANTS AT LAST YEAR'S CICOP CONFERENCE IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

LATIN AMERICAN RELIGIO-SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXPERTS ATTENDING PAST CICOP CONFERENCES HAVE PRAISED THE ANNUAL SESSIONS AS AN OUTSTANDING FORUM FOR DIALOGUE ON INTER-AMERICAN UNDERSTANDING AND COLLABORATION.

RESERVATIONS AND FURTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING THE FIFTH ANNUAL NATIONAL CICOP CONFERENCE ARE AVAILABLE BY WRITING TO: CATHOLIC INTER-AMERICAN COOPERATION PROGRAM, BOX 946, DAVENPORT, IOWA 52805.