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Project: BOLIVIA

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The Chicago Catholic Physicians' Guild is now engaged in a program to share the tremendous advantages of the physicians of the United States with those of one of the smaller countries of South America, Bolivia. Designed to place doctors from Bolivia in non-critical occupations in several Chicago hospitals, the plan has a double purpose. The first is to enable the South American visitors to learn conversational English so that they can pass the Educational Council for Foreign Medical Graduates examination and qualify for internships and residencies in various medical and surgical specialities. The second purpose is to enable these men to fill teaching posts in Bolivian medical schools when they have completed their training here.

Cooperating in the program are the Dominican Bolivian Missions, the Archdiocesan Hospital Association and several Catholic hospitals in the Chicago area.

The placements amount to working scholarships, and the idea for them came from Father Timothy Sullivan, O.P., a former Chicagoan, now a Dominican Missioner in the University of Cochabamba, Bolivia. Father Sullivan soon after beginning his work with the students in the University

five years ago, saw a strong communist influence in all branches of the institution. To counteract this, Father Sullivan organized a strong student party which was successful in winning organization of the student body to the Catholic party.

A dedicated group of Catholic students in the medical school decided that post-graduate training in medicine in the United States would enable them to return to Bolivia to continue their work in Catholic Action as faculty members of the University.

Father Sullivan contacted the late Dr. Joseph Nora, Sr. of Chicago, and arranged for placement of two men at Mother Cabrini Hospital. Following the death of Dr. Nora, Drs. Walter T. Hackett, Joseph Nora, Jr., and Richard A. Buckingham of the Catholic Physicians' Guild took over the Chicago part of the program.

The Guild members procured the approval of Msgr. John W. Barrett, Director of the Archdiocesan Hospital Association and began contacting sister-administrators of various hospitals to procure further places for the Bolivians.

Guild members found the sisters very enthusiastic and there are now nineteen recent medical graduates from Bolivia in six of the Catholic Hospitals in this area. The sisters have placed the men in non-patient care situations in accord with recent American Medical Association and Illinois Department of Registration and Education recommendations. They work as intravenous therapists, research and laboratory assistants, and

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surgical technicians. The work is not demanding and they have sufficient time to study for their examination. The usual stipend is one hundred fifty dollars per month plus room, board, and laundry. Some of the doctors whose English has improved rapidly have received increases in salary commensurate with their work. Many of the doctors are able to send some of their pay home to their families in Bolivia where the economy is severely depressed.

Ordinarily, a Bolivian will stay at this type of work less than a year. The ECFMG exam is given twice a year. In a year's time the doctors will have at least two opportunities to pass the test.

The reason for placing the doctors in Chicago before they take the ECFMG exam is that the quickest and most efficient method for them to learn conversational English is for them to be in an environment where they are forced to speak it. Further, hospital authorities appreciate having interns who have had several months to practice their English before beginning work on the hospital wards.

Having passed the ECFMG exam, the men can readily secure internships in one of the many approved hospitals in the Chicago area. Following the internship, they will take residencies under the guidance of the Guild. When they have completed these studies they will return to Bolivia to begin their teaching duties.

The pro-America propaganda value of the program must not be overlooked. At the present time there are many South American students studying in Iron Curtain countries. Each Bolivian trained as a specialist in the

United States will be a supporter of the West as long as he lives. Actually, he will be far more than a good will ambassador, since he will live in Bolivia. His life, his work, and his good patient care will represent the United States long after the good will ambassadors are forgotten and the last foreign aid dollar is spent.

This program costs the federal taxpayer nothing. At all stages of their training, these men tender services which justify the salaries they receive. Much of the success of the program depends on the sisters who make the position available.

The CCPG feels that this type of private assistance to South American physicians is overdue. We have so long ignored the needs of our southern neighbors that they are beginning to listen to others whose ideologies are distant but whose help is close at hand. We cannot afford the danger of having such a significant segment of the population of these countries as the physicians represent come under the influence of enemies of the Western World. The adoption of similar programs in large metropolitan areas in the United States would be advantageous to both of the Americas.

The present program gives South American doctors ample opportunity to study English and modern medical methods, and to see for themselves what it is to live in the United States. The program is not for the lazy or indifferent student. Only the best men are chosen to be sent here, and only the best men will return to represent the Church, the United States of America, and American medicine in South America.