

YOUNG WOMEN'S MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Bertha S. Reeder, President
 Emily H. Bennett, First Counselor
 LaRue C. Longden, Second Counselor

with all the members of the board as at present constituted

PRIMARY ASSOCIATION

Adele Cannon Howells, President
 LaVern W. Parmley, First Counselor
 Dessie G. Boyle, Second Counselor

with all the members of the board as at present constituted

President David O. McKay:

All you who can sustain these brethren and sisters in their respective positions, with the explanation made regarding the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, please manifest it by raising your right hand.

(the hands were raised)

As far as I can see the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative.

President George Albert Smith:

We have just heard President David O. McKay of the First Presidency presenting the General Authorities, general officers and general auxiliary officers of the Church for the sustaining vote of the Conference. It is a magnificent sight from this point of vantage to look over this great audience and see the unanimous vote—not a dissenting vote being apparent.

ELDER STEPHEN L RICHARDS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I have been deeply moved by this conference, my brethren and sisters, and my inclination would be to spend my allotted time in lending support and sanction to the great messages which have come to us. I have, however, another obligation that I feel I must discharge.

REPORT OF SOUTH AMERICAN TRIP

My wife and I returned from South America last spring just a day or two too late to attend the April conference. While I have spoken of some of my experiences in a few of the stake conferences, I have thought that I should make a report to the Church on our visits to these missions in the southern continent.

Perhaps it might be well at the outset just to refresh your geographical memories a little. South America is not only south of North America, but it is almost entirely east of the United States, so that during nearly all of the time we spent away we were four hours, or time zones; east of Salt Lake City, and only two time zones west of London. Our travels consumed about eighteen thousand miles, so you see we here at home are a long way from our fellow members in the missions of South America, and because of that difference and the fact that about twenty-two years had elapsed since that country was visited by General Authorities, you will readily understand that we were awaited with a royal welcome.

We left Salt Lake City on the last day of December last year. We spent about two weeks in Washington D.C., and in New York in securing letters of introduction to prominent business people in the south, and also in interviews at the embassies of the countries we intended to visit, where we were introduced through the courtesy of our Congressional representatives. We never did secure time enough to present all of these letters, but we had the satisfaction of making our mission presidents acquainted with some prominent men who may be of some aid in the future.

It was bitter cold when we left New York harbor, with some of the water pipes of the ship frozen, so I assure you it was altogether agreeable, after a few days, to come into a warmer climate. However, we found that you can often get too much of a good thing, and when we reached Rio de Janeiro in the middle of their summer, comparable to our July, in a heat wave more intense than they had had in four years, we longed for the snow and ice we had so recently left. You know you can usually protect yourself against the cold, but you can't against the heat, and I am sure I prolonged my visit to the few air-conditioned offices where I presented letters of introduction, beyond the bounds of strict propriety. I hope it wasn't too obvious. Down in Sao Paulo, the headquarters of the Brazilian Mission, it was a little bit more temperate because that has some elevation above the sea, and Montevideo and Buenos Aires are farther south and in a more temperate zone.

"DIVINE SERVICES" CONDUCTED

Soon after we boarded the ship, we were happy to learn that there were seven missionaries aboard, and one member of the Church in the ship's employ. With the assistance of these good folk, on the request of the ship's command, we conducted what were called "divine services" on the two Sundays of the voyage. The missionaries were all splendid young men. I am sure they made an excellent impression. On the way home, on the same ship and a sister ship, we were asked to conduct three more Sunday services, so that I began to feel that I ought to have been put on the ship's payroll. That hope vanished early, however, when it was learned

that we didn't preach for hire. The captain, however, rewarded me somewhat by giving me the rather rare privilege of going on the bridge of the vessel with an officer guide to explain the mysteries of automatic steering and radar, and when I was escorted to the huge engine room where I inspected one of the greatest power plants I have ever seen, I felt quite rewarded for my preaching.

We arrived in Buenos Aires, headquarters of the Argentine Mission, in the morning. We could see from the ship's deck the mission president, and his wife, and the missionaries and Saints gathered to meet us. It was noon, however, before we could greet them. The time consumed in getting baggage through customs and in the inspection of visas and securing medical permits, is very considerable, I assure you.

INCONVENIENCE OF RECEIVING PACKAGES

In this connection I would like to broadcast the counsel throughout the Church to all parents and friends of missionaries in the South American missions, not to send to the missionaries packages at Christmas, or any other time, containing articles which are not essential to them in their work. It often requires many hours and sometimes days of the precious time of missionaries, or the mission staff, to get packages out of customs, and a box of stale cookies which has spent two or three months on the way, even though it carries a lot of love and sentiment from the folk at home isn't worth it. An airmail letter on thin paper with a ten-cent stamp is a far more expeditious and satisfactory message of your affection and encouragement under the circumstances that prevail in South America.

There is a word in frequent use in South America which expresses a quality wholly necessary to peace of mind. It is the word *paciencia* meaning patience. Everybody takes his time about doing things, the government and its agencies, especially. The sooner you learn this the happier you are.

HOSPITABLE RECEPTION

Well, we finally got through customs to enjoy the welcome and greetings of our patient friends. I will say just a word about our reception at the Laniers Branch of the Argentine Mission in Buenos Aires, because this was typical of the hospitality and greeting of the Saints and missionaries throughout the missions. The Laniers Branch is the largest of all the branches of the Church in South America, and is one of the very few which owns its own place of meeting, which is a very modest one. On this occasion there were gathered about four hundred members of the Church and friends. The hall was crowded. It had been decorated with flowers and streamers, and presented an attractive appearance. An elaborate program had been prepared, with both amateur and professional

talent, consisting of speeches, singing, and folk dancing rendered in Spanish and native costume, with some interpretations for our benefit. Children participated liberally. Some of the skits and songs had been specially written, and the whole program represented the expenditure of a large amount of time and effort in preparation. As a climax, Sister Richards was presented with beautiful flowers which grow in profusion in that country. On one occasion the orchids given to her hung from her shoulder almost to her knee. I know the ladies will take note of that.

I was given a beautifully ornamented cake made by some of the good sisters. I am not supposed to eat cake, but I soon discovered that the missionaries have good appetites without many restrictions, and I assure you that none of the cake given to me was wasted.

It was in this welcoming social that we were first made really to feel the sentiment and spirit of our fellow members of the Church in those distant lands. They were respectful and reverent almost to an embarrassing degree. I am not used to having my hand kissed, a custom which is a holdover that some of the older people have kept, from the traditions and practices of their earlier affiliations. They were warm-hearted, and for the most part demonstrative and impulsive. It was apparent that the fellowship promoted by the Church had found a place in their lives, and particularly among the sisters I noted that affectionate regard for each other which we so frequently see at home. It was apparent that nearly all were in humble circumstances, although many were tastefully and somewhat stylishly dressed. Particularly was this true of the girls. They were, however, a little short on the latest fashions. The long skirts had not yet reached them.

MANY NATIONALITIES REPRESENTED

It was evident that many nationalities were represented, with a preponderance of the brunette people from Spain, Italy, and the Mediterranean countries. There were a few of German and English extraction, but far more from southern than from northern Europe. This group of people which we first met were typical in their racial composition, of the groups we met in all the missions. The stocks from southern Europe prevail. Spanish is the national language in Argentina and Uruguay, and in Brazil, the Portuguese. I talked with a number of families in Brazil who prided themselves on pure Portuguese blood. It so happens, however, that our work in both Argentina and Brazil was begun in the German language, among immigrants from Germany. We still have a few German groups of Saints, where German is spoken, but this practice is being discontinued.

It should be said here, for the information of the Church, that our South American missions do substantially no work among the

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Lamanite people, and so far as I know, we have no Indian members of the Church in these missions. I met a few Indian boys who were attending school at one of the universities in Argentina who had come from Peru. The missionaries had made friends with them, and they took part on one of our programs. They were small-statured, but seemed intelligent and kindly disposed, and some day perhaps our work may be carried to their country.

DISTRUST IN EVIDENCE

My observation that the Latin Americans are predominantly from the southern European stocks led me to wonder how susceptible these people are to the teachings and influence of the gospel. I recalled that in more than one hundred years we have done little or no missionary work in Spain, Italy, Portugal, and adjacent countries. Perhaps this may be the means, in South America, of some day approaching those countries. I thought I could see in the disposition, customs and practices of these South Americans, some of the reasons which have impeded gospel work among them. They are people who have suffered many impositions. They have not been trained and nurtured in the kind of freedoms which northern Europeans and North Americans have enjoyed, in consequence of which, perhaps, they have become by nature suspicious and distrustful. American businessmen told me that after many years of business dealings they were unable to build up that mutual confidence and friendship with native South Americans which may be established in a few weeks or months among our own people. The buildings and homes of the people are indicative of this distrust. Everything is walled in. Even a little home is usually surrounded by a wall six, ten, twelve feet in height, almost unscalable, with a locked gate and sometimes broken glass on top of the wall as a protection against neighbors and others who ought to be counted friends.

All this has a bearing on our missionary work, as you will readily see. Homes are not easily accessible. Interviews are difficult and it takes a long time to build up that confidence which is essential to friendship and mutual understanding. Tracting is attended with difficulties, not only because of walls and locked gates, but because customs are new and strange to our missionaries. During the daytime men folk are not at home, except perhaps for the siesta period, when they are not to be disturbed. This siesta takes a big portion out of a day. Places of business close from twelve to three o'clock, and our missionaries are greatly limited in their opportunities to make contacts. In some sections they were beginning evening tracting in the hope of meeting the families at what would seem to us late hours. I have not heard yet what success attended these experiments.

In the main our missionary work is prosecuted through the medium of *locales*. A *local* is usually a small rented building which serves as a home for the missionaries and a place of meeting in carry-

ing forward Church activities for the groups who attend. One room in the *local* is fitted out to serve as a little church modestly equipped with a pulpit, a small organ and benches. Owing to the housing shortage which prevails in South America as it does with us, it has been very difficult to secure *locales* in good locations of the cities, and we have often been forced to take places in poor localities.

CIVILIZATION CENTERS IN CITIES

It should be noted that all civilized life in South America centers in the big cities. There is very little agricultural or rural life, as we know it. The vast livestock ranches of Argentina, and the coffee plantations of Brazil are owned by wealthy families who live in the big cities and who dominate the whole agricultural field. The independent farm owner and operator is almost unknown. This situation is material to our missionary work. We do no country work. Our missionaries visit no farm homes so productive of investigators and converts in other countries. They are not allowed, without permits, even to enter the great ranches and plantations. One of the greatest needs apparent in the countries we visited is a division of the lands for a far greater productivity and realization of the vast resources of the countries, and more importantly, for the establishment of an independent, vigorous middle class of land-owners and workers.

South America is a land of violent contrasts—the very beautiful and the very ugly; the very rich and the very poor; the very intellectual and sophisticated, and the very ignorant. Of course, countries differ in these respects, but everywhere there is conspicuously lacking that strong middle class which is the backbone of our own and other progressive countries. I saw some indications that this class may be growing. In some industrial centers, such as Sao Paulo in Brazil, when and if it grows, our missionary work will have more assurance of success. It takes humility and intelligence to understand and receive the restored gospel. The aristocracy lack the humility, and the poor and destitute often lack in good measure the intelligence.

PROMISING PROSPECTS AMONG YOUTH

Our most promising prospects are among the youth in all the countries. They are forward-looking, and they are emerging from some of the distrust and suspicion which has so retarded the progress of their elders. These young people have admiration for many things in America. They learn about us largely through the picture shows. Unfortunately, through this medium they do not always get correct impressions of the best part of our North American life. It's a shame that we have to be advertised by the most effective advertising there is, for our gangsterism, infidelity, frivolity, and

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cheap wit. These young people, however, see our automobiles, our clothes, our fine homes in the pictures, and they think they would like to have some of these things. They want to learn English and our missionaries capitalize on this desire and teach many of them English. English classes are held in the *locales*. The young people who come in contact with our missionaries develop a great admiration for them—for their fine, clean manhood, their friendliness and their serious work. Mutual Improvement Associations are begun, and gradually the gospel plan unfolds before these people, and they are given an entirely new vision of abundant and rich living with purpose and incentive, even in their poverty.

I saw some branches of the mission made up and carried forward entirely by young people. Of course, there are older people, too, who have proved susceptible to gospel teaching, but in the main I feel that our hope lies with the youth.

South America desperately needs the restored gospel. The nations of that land need, more than anything else, the true concepts of liberty which arise out of a correct understanding of the relationship of man to God and his fellow man. They need a comprehension of justice, equity, and equality. They need to understand more perfectly the dignity of work, and, of course, they need the enlightenment of education. As one man said who gave me a letter of introduction to business associates in South America: "South America needs what the Mormon Church has to offer."

Our missionaries are trying hard to give these things to the people who so sorely need them. Their work is conducted at great expense. It costs more than one thousand dollars in transportation alone to put a missionary in one of these missions and bring him home. Living costs are very high, even in American money, which sells at a premium. The language is difficult, particularly the Portuguese, and many months pass before a missionary can adequately express himself before the people. However, they, our missionaries, carry with them a spirit, and the testimony of truth which, even imperfectly expressed in the language of the people, touches the hearts of many who hear them.

MISSIONARIES AND SAINTS FAITHFUL

Now I found in all the missions a great enthusiasm among the missionaries for their work. They have developed a love for the people, which lies at the base of all good missionary labors, and they, under the direction of their mission presidents, are organizing and planning to meet the conditions. We also have some very faithful Saints who are great aids in promoting our work. I saw some very good work being carried forward by small branches of the missions—Sunday Schools and Primaries where little children are being taught; priesthood classes where men and boys are learning their duties; Relief Societies and welfare workers are carrying for-

ward commendable projects. Generally, the groups were small and largely dependent upon the missionaries, but there was promise in them. Perhaps the most stimulating of any exercises I saw were the baptismal ceremonies. We had the privilege of being present at two, one in Argentina and one in the interior of Brazil. Nothing is more encouraging to missionaries and to members of the Church than to see the fruits of their labors and the happiness which comes to those who ally themselves with the work of the Lord. In each service, six to ten were baptized into the Church.

If time permitted, I would tell you some rather interesting aspects of these baptismal services, but it does not. After all, this is the great encouragement to our missionaries. The realization of knowing that they may have been the means of bringing peace—peace of mind and peace to the heart and soul of some one of God's children who has humbled himself to seek the truth. I am not able to say how many in South America will respond to the spirit and message we bear, but I am sure we are doing our duty, fulfilling divine command, when we carry the word of our Lord to all lands and peoples.

GRATITUDE FOR VISIT

I acknowledge my gratitude to the First Presidency in extending to me the opportunity of making this visit, and I also acknowledge the innumerable courtesies and kindnesses shown to my wife and me by the mission presidents and their wives, the missionaries, and Saints, and friends of the South American missions. It was an unforgettable experience. If any good to the noble cause, which I love, shall come of it, I shall be very grateful.

I pray that the Lord may bless our missionaries in all lands and the Saints who are scattered over the earth. I trust that they may all feel as we tried to make them feel in South America, that we are all one in the Church of Christ, that even though we may be widely separated, we can reach out over the lands and the oceans and extend the handclasp of fellowship and good brotherhood to our members throughout the globe. I think this was the message which they, in the southern hemisphere, appreciated more than any other. They wanted to be assured that they were one with us and we with them. The day will come, my brothers and sisters, when the mighty cause with which we have the honor to be associated, will bring to pass that unity in a divided and stricken world. God grant it may come soon I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus. Amen.