

## Meeting of the Latin American Issues Sub-Committee of the International Fellowship Committee

January 5-7, 2007

Pueblo Colorado

### **In attendance:**

Dolores Nice  
Agustin Arellano  
Susan Ransbottom  
Lenny Cowles  
Tim Hobbs  
David Kantor  
Svetlana Braziene  
Buck Weimer  
Arlene Weimer  
Lynn Chapman  
Don Chapman  
Delmar Milne  
Jane Milne

We are all grateful to Dolores Nice for helping us to maintain a spiritual retreat atmosphere as the context in which our deliberations took place.

### **Initial Reports:**

Agustin Arellano: Overview of current Latin American work; regional needs; projected contacts and conferences for 2007; review of emerging leaders and sources of problems; Spanish language web services. A list of individuals was reviewed and decisions were made related to leadership potential—which ones should continue to be provided with books and other media resources as contrasted with those we feel it is important to support with scholarships to regional conferences and the fostering of interpersonal contacts with other identified leaders.

Buck Weimer: Overview of current African situation; regional needs; need to continue linking regional leaders; status of work in Zambia; status of work in South Africa; review of current support projects and related problems. The need for an all-African conference within the next few years was discussed. As a result of Buck and Arlene's visit to South Africa this past year more than \$3,000.00 worth of books have been ordered. Chita and Namukale recently made a foray into Tanzania, distributing books and making important contacts. Their work is currently being facilitated by contributions from the Fellowship, UBLA, and several private sources.

### **Book Shipment Coordination**

Because Agustin was flying up for this meeting and could carry books back to Mexico, two cases of Spanish books were ordered from Urantia Foundation. Unfortunately they made a mistake and shipped English books instead of Spanish books. They arrived two days before our meeting—not enough time to get them replaced. Fortunately the four German and four Italian books we ordered actually arrived as ordered. Agustin returned to Mexico with these books, a quantity of Harry's Spanish books, and some of the Spanish posters of Jesus' life timeline. More will be shipped.

### **Items of Discussion**

International Reader Services Job Description: This was the primary consideration of the group and the primary reason for having the meeting. A comprehensive job description was created. It is currently being refined during ongoing email discussions and will be presented to the Executive Committee at its meeting in February.

Spanish Language Television Production: A potentially far-reaching opportunity exists to participate in the creation of Spanish language Urantia Book based programming content for a television producer in

Ecuador. The group will continue to investigate this and will create a proposal and budget to submit to the Executive Committee later this year.

In conjunction with this discussion Agustin Arellano outlined some similar opportunities which exist vis-à-vis mass media in other Latin American countries. David reviewed some of the approaches used by the Family of God Foundation in securing access to international media outlets. It was agreed that we should produce some CDs which contain programs timed for 30 minutes, 15 minutes, 3 minutes, and one minute, and to distribute these widely to regional Latin American media outlets. Agustin Arellano will follow-up on this in consultation with Nelida Oliver and Fr. Nelson Fernando Carillo who has access to the Jesuit's media studios in Quito, Ecuador.

An exposition sponsored by the Parliament of the World's Religions is scheduled for Monterrey, Mexico, in the fall of 2007. Agustin Arellano presented preliminary information on this opportunity. The expenses of participating were compared with the expenses of participating in other important regional events such as the Guadalajara Book Fair and regional expos sponsored by Expo Infinito. After considerable discussion, the costs of participating in the Monterrey expo were deemed to be disproportionate. The Expo Infinito program seemed to hold much more potential and will be explored further.

IC08 provides an opportunity to educate attendees about the work of the International Fellowship Committee. Initial considerations for a booth at the IC08 meeting were discussed; the greatest amount of interest was expressed about the creation of an interactive exhibit with lots of photographs of study groups around the world. The exhibit will be focused on generating interest and participation in the international work and soliciting help with the purchase of books and shipping to international contacts. The group will continue to follow up with developmental plans.

Problems related to book shipment were reviewed. Agustin is in contact with a reader who is a pilot for Mexicana and who has offered to carry books to Latin American destinations at no cost. He has also offered some of his free monthly travel benefits to Agustin. Agustin and David are working to secure these offers and set up a schedule of book shipments and travel which will become possible with this offer. In addition, several other approaches to dealing with book shipment problems were discussed. Specific individuals were assigned to get additional information about several options that were discussed. These were:

Couriers—If we watch the Internet for cut-rate fares it might be possible to have someone fly down to a Latin American country and carry the baggage maximum in books at a considerably lower cost than shipping them. In addition there would be the personal contact and the opportunity for the courier to meet with local groups.

Getting through customs—We need to be better informed about customs regulations in various countries. For example, in Mexico there is a maximum of 5 books that can be shipped without needing to pay customs duties.

Getting Societies and Study Groups involved in shipping—Can we get these groups to commit to providing shipping expenses for books donated through other programs? This will be investigated further and will likely be a topic of presentation at the IC08 International Fellowship Committee booth.

Businesses regularly shipping to Latin America—Buck Weimer will investigate the possibility of shipping a few books along with other commercial products sent by businesses managed by readers of The Urantia Book.

Continuing development of Spanish language websites—David and Agustin spent considerable time discussing the further development of Spanish language web services. We are moving ahead with sites for UrantiaEcuador.org and UrantiaPeru.org. Over time sites will be added for each of the Central and South American countries including information about regional contacts, study groups, etc. The Fellowship will host these sites on its server and regional Latin American technicians will take care of maintenance of their respective web spaces.

Unvisited Latin American Countries—Over the past five years a significant number of Latin American countries have been visited by a Fellowship delegation for purposes of reinforcing local readership infrastructure and establishing personal relationships with potential regional leadership. Important personal contacts have been made and ongoing correspondence is providing a growing foundation for leadership development. Some important countries have not been visited due to extreme budget limitations—among them are Venezuela and Argentina.

A one week tour to Venezuela will be undertaken with visits to readers and public meetings in Caracas, Merida, y Maracaibo. Because there is an advisory against Americans traveling in Venezuela at present, this trip will be made by Agustin Arellano and will include coordination with our longtime associate, Marcelino Ramirez, who is now living in Merida.

The group in Mazatlán will continue its support for reader groups in Cuba, which has been going on now for more than five years.

A one week tour is being planned for Argentina—another country which we have not visited and for which we have over 500 active email contacts. This trip will include meetings with readers and public presentations in Cordoba, Rosario, y Buenos Aires. This tour is being planned and coordinated by Nelida Oliver, a longtime dedicated Urantian activist who spends part of her year in Argentina and part of her year in Ecuador. She is to the southern part of the continent what Agustin Arellano is to Mexico, Central America, and the northern part of the Latin continent. Nelida has extensive contacts in Latin American mass media and the work in Argentina will include radio and television interviews and promotional activities. We discussed the importance of making sure that Nelida is able to attend IC08 and perhaps visit some regional societies. Her daughter has a travel agency and is increasingly able to help with our travel-related issues.

Financial support for this tour was included in the International Fellowship Committee budget for 2007. At this weekend's meeting we dealt with the distribution of the budgeted amount across the various categories of travel, lodging, transportation, renting of venues, etc. It appears that significant support for this trip will come from regional leadership.

An additional point of discussion was the issue of availability of books in local bookstores if we were to take advantage of regional opportunities for mass media exposure. Why allocate resources to promoting the book when none are available in local bookstores? It was understood that this was a problem involving legal and business agreements between the Fellowship and Urantia Foundation. In this regard the work of this committee is held captive to the political and legal understandings reached between the two organizations. The International Fellowship Committee has people and contacts ready to be exploited for purposes of significantly furthering the spread of the revelation if the appropriate legal mechanisms can be put in place.

As part of this discussion we looked at putting in place a network of contacts across all Latin American countries—contacts to whom we could reliably ship books for regional distribution. Agustin Arellano at present has a list of contacts reliable enough for implementation of this approach. In addition the cultural implications were discussed of having primary contacts in each country comprised of older, more mature and experienced individuals while younger people could be tasked with travel and the carrying of books into various countries and establishing personal relationships with peers. It was emphasized that 75% of much of the population of Latin America is under the age of 18.

Managing Regional Leadership: The development of an online reporting system was discussed. Under the plan agreed upon a reporting database would be created online which would be accessible by members of the Executive Committee and perhaps selected contributors. This database would contain quarterly reports from regional leadership about their activities, books distributed, etc. Regional leaders would be provided with web-based forms to use in reporting their activities and this information would then be available in the international reporting database.

Spiritual Vitamins: The spiritual vitamins initially created by Larry and Donna Whelan have turned out to be extremely popular. The need to translate them into various languages was discussed. Also discussed was the need to create a mechanical device which could be used to automate the process of loading the spiritual vitamins into their gelatin capsules. Lenny, David, and Buck will follow up on this. (Lenny has promised an actual diagram of the proposed device which some felt could be turned into a commercial product.)

Software for use by regional leadership: The need to provide software for use by regional leaders was discussed. Tim Hobbs agreed that the best way to manage this problem would be to install the software on our administrative server and provide access passwords to individuals who had permission to use it. This would give us one online location for critical software, a single point for updates, and full management of users, without requiring us to purchase and ship software internationally for local use. David agreed to pursue this to implementation.

Agustin Arellano's travels for 2007: We discussed Agustin's contacts with established and new study groups throughout Latin America during 2007. The projected work for 2007 is incorporated into the following schedule:

January:  
Tepic  
Zacatecas

February:  
Querétaro  
Mazatlón  
Quito (Ecuador)  
Lima (Peru)

March:  
Cusco (Peru)  
Villahermosa  
Durango  
Mazatlón  
Guatemala y San Salvador

April:  
Merida  
Morelia  
Aguas Calientes  
León

May:  
Veracruz  
Chiapas  
Ixtapa  
Córdoba

June:  
Buenos Aires (Argentina)  
Querétaro  
Venezuela tour—Caracas, Merida, Maracaibo  
Pueblo

July:  
Europe:  
Reader groups in France  
Reader groups in Spain

August:  
Reader groups in Vichy

September:  
Cuernavaca  
Monterrey  
Campeche  
Oaxaca

October:  
Monterrey  
San Luis Potosi  
Coahuila  
Chihuahua

November:  
Senguio  
Aguas Calientes

December:  
Mexicali  
Cuba  
Honduras  
Costa Rica  
Nicaragua

These are the highlights of the work accomplished this weekend. I wish to express my deep gratitude to Buck and Arlene Weimer, and to Lynn and Don Chapman, who made their homes available for the lodging of participants, and to Delmar and Jane Milne who opened their home for a delightful social gathering of readers from the Pueblo area on Saturday night and some outstanding smoked salmon. I also want to express appreciation for Lenny and Susan who braved whiteout conditions to drive from the mountains above Boulder south to Pueblo, and to Agustin Arellano who forsook the pleasantries of the temperate climes for an incursion into the depths of a Colorado winter.

Humbly submitted with gratitude for the opportunity to be of service in the work of the Father's kingdom,  
David Kantor for our entire group