

New Mexico Quarterly

Volume 3 | Issue 2

Article 5

1933

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James Fulton Zimmerman

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Recommended Citation

Zimmerman, James Fulton. "Social and Cultural Elements of Pan Americanism." *New Mexico Quarterly* 3, 2 (1933).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol3/iss2/5>

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Social and Cultural Elements of Pan Americanism*

By JAMES FULTON ZIMMERMAN

IN OUR relations with Latin American nations many difficulties and misunderstandings have arisen, which are immediately due to economic and political policies, but which may ultimately be traced largely to fundamental differences in language and in racial psychology combined with varying stages of cultural and national development. A casual review of the history of our relations with the nations to the south of us reveals clearly that it is only within recent years that effective cultural associations have become possible between the United States with its English language, literature, common law and customs, and the southern republics with their Romance languages, Napoleonic code, and Latin traditions.

As these social and cultural elements of Pan-Americanism are appreciated, they will have the effect of modifying political and economic policies and, it is hoped, will result in improved inter-American relations.

The addresses of President Hoover delivered on the occasion of his visit to Central and South America contained no references to political questions, nothing of treaties and diplomacy, and such comments as he made on commercial and industrial relations were subordinated to the more vital purpose of upbuilding the cultural, moral, and spiritual forces between the nations—forces which in his view are making for increased human happiness and good-will. He stressed the spread of education, music, art, and drama in the various countries visited, and urged more effective organizations for the exchange of ideas in science and technology which “know no frontiers, and know all languages.”

The same emphasis on cultural relations characterized the addresses given on the occasion of the first Pan-Ameri-

* Paper read at the meeting of the Institute of World Affairs, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, December 16, 1932.

can Day celebrations in 1931 and the second commemoration of that occasion in 1932. Those elements of Pan-Americanism which seek the fraternal rapprochement of all the peoples of the new world without dwelling upon the differences of language, descent, religion, and customs, were given predominance in the most thoughtful comments heard in all countries. Different speakers urged upon the universities the responsibility of the propagation of this kind of Pan-Americanism so that the coming generations through the secondary and primary schools will see to it that leaders of international politics follow in this current of cultural public opinion. Charges that political leaders in the United States now stress cultural topics in order to avoid unpleasant and somewhat embarrassing political and economic questions may be well-founded, but in any event it will be a great gain if all statesmen come to see that in cultural realms the people of different nations can meet on equal and friendly terms. A nation as a rule is not led to hatred and war with another nation because of a knowledge of that nation's literature or painting or music. Furthermore, if by some method we can find out how to humanize and socialize our relations with other peoples, we may find the defect of the old diplomacy and the key to a deeper and finer appreciation of the people of other countries, which will make for goodwill and peaceful relations despite the difficulties which may arise from political and economic sources. Perhaps the finest example of the diplomat who sought to know the ideals, art, and literature of a people and to use the cultural approach to come to better understanding is to be found in the late Dwight Morrow, Ambassador to Mexico. He really learned to know and love the Mexican people. He made every effort to interpret their art and literature to our people, and the result was more harmonious relations with Mexico.

The more or less automatic channels through which social and cultural propaganda may be spread are music,

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art, literature, the press, commerce, travel, radio, and motion pictures. The unusual development within recent years of the opportunity for cultural exchange by means of these various agencies is most encouraging, but there still remain vast possibilities for improvement in the case of many if not of most of them.

The voluntary channels through which universities may carry on the work of cultural exchange are numerous. Perhaps a list of the most outstanding should include: The Institute of International Education, The Institute of Intellectual Co-operation of the Pan-American Union, The Guggenheim Foundation, The Pan-American Institute of Geography and History, The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, The Carnegie Institution of Washington, The Rockefeller Foundation, The American Association of University Professors, The American Library Association's Committee on Library Co-operation with Hispanic Peoples, The American Federation of Art, The International Congress of Americanists, The Association of American Museums, the various summer schools, The Institute of World Affairs, Riverside, and similar institutes in other universities and colleges.

It is not the purpose of this paper to enter into the detailed history, organization, and work of these important agencies. Such facts, if not well known, are easily available. I do wish, however, to point out the need for much greater accomplishments than have as yet resulted from the combined work of all of these agencies and to indicate also how educational institutions in the American Southwest may render greater service in this important phase of inter-American relations.

In the field of exchange of students the net results to date show about 1,200 Latin-American students studying in all the colleges and universities of the United States, with a much smaller number of our students studying in the institutions of Latin-America. While no one would for a

moment seek to discount this achievement, it would seem that the institutions represented in this conference alone, located as we are, adjacent to a great nation like Mexico, should have at least 1,000 or 1,200 students from that country alone in our institutions and perhaps an equal number of our students in the institutions of that country. I may use the University of New Mexico as an illustration by reporting that we have been able to make provision for only one such student. The exchange of professors has been of some value, no doubt, but unfortunately such professors are often regarded as mere propagandists and all their work discounted for that reason. The plan could be greatly improved, as Dr. Norton and others have pointed out, by having well-trained young professors from Latin American countries become regular members of our university faculties for three or four years. They could then return to their own countries and their places be filled by other countrymen of like preparation. Likewise, young professors from the United States could give similar terms of service in Latin American universities. Such an interchange of faculty members would be a great improvement over the present brief exchange plan, for each of them would take back to his native country a real understanding of the life and character of the country in which he had lived and worked, and would be able to spread such an understanding throughout his native country.

The fact is that with all the agencies now seeking to promote better understanding and good-will between the Americas, and with all the earnest efforts they are putting forth, progress is too slow and too meager to warrant any feeling of satisfaction with present results. If we turn to the report of Dr. Henry Kittredge Norton, who visited seven South American countries in the summer of 1931 under the auspices of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, we read with distress and humiliation that he came in contact with "ignorance, misunderstanding,

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prejudice, misinformation, and mendacious propaganda" as regards the United States, and on his return to this country met with "a similar concatenation of inaccuracies prevalent in regard to the republics to the south." He deplores our ignorance of their unusual progress, their great cities, and their way of life, and deplores also their conception of us as "boorish, aggressive, money-mad imperialists without a suggestion of culture." "It is on the cultural side," says Dr. Norton, "that there is greatest confusion."

If our institutions are agencies of culture and if we are serious at all about the interchange of the cultural elements on this continent, it is obvious that there remains much yet to be done. It is my contention that every institution in the Southwestern states could do far more than it is now doing to develop a greater interest in and appreciation for the culture of those of Latin or Spanish descent who live among us. Our first obligation, it seems to me, is to get into real contact with the Spanish-speaking people in our own states, and make greater efforts than we have ever yet made to understand their ideas and ideals, and indeed their entire philosophy of life. We must enter into genuine and profound study of their educational processes, their folk-lore, literature, art, and habits of life and thought. National agencies and bureaus may furnish aid for such a program of study, but the impetus and direction must come from within our own communities. In New Mexico, for example, we have the two peoples, Spanish-speaking and English-speaking, each with its different views of life, which in turn produce misunderstandings and prejudices. Here then we have within our own states of the Southwest the central problems of Pan-Americanism on its social and cultural side. Why not attack the problems at home as we find them?

This we are trying to do in New Mexico along three definite lines as follows: First, through an experimental school for Spanish-speaking children in the elementary grades; second, through study and popularization of Span-

ish history and folk-lore; and third, through the bi-lingual club which has evolved into what may well be called "a practical experiment in the spirit of Pan-Americanism." In this club, which has now developed into a Bi-Lingual Pan-American Institute by encouraging the organization of similar clubs in adjacent colleges, fundamental questions affecting the relationship of the two peoples are being discussed in Spanish and in English by representatives of both cultures. The two peoples, both true Americans, are in this way actually working and thinking together. Such contacts are resulting in better understanding and appreciation and give reason for the hope that they will gradually mitigate and possibly eliminate existing racial misunderstandings, prejudices, and injustices. Probably the most important result will grow out of the fact that the work will proceed from the bottom up and not from the top down as has been the case too often with the work of national and international agencies and bureaus. I sometimes wonder if the almost necessary red tape of many of the usual organizations and bureaus does not obscure the genuine human elements which are so vital to better cultural understandings.

I make haste, however, to add that it is not my purpose to seek to discount or in any way disparage the important work of existing essential co-ordinating agencies in this field. The outstanding services of all of them call for the highest commendation. To me it seems of special significance that the Inter-American Institute of Intellectual Cooperation was established at the Sixth Pan-American Conference to serve as a clearing house for all the national councils on information relative to education, science, arts, and letters, and to promote the interchange of professors, students, and research workers. The National Council for the United States, having three representatives in the Southwest—one from Stanford, Dr. A. Coester, one from the University of California, Dr. Herbert E. Bolton, and one from the Civic Bureau of Music and Art of Los Angeles, Mr.

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John Mott—has begun to function, and I believe institutions in California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico should fall heartily into line with the general purposes of this organization.

Furthermore, it is my strong conviction that the efforts of individual institutions in our Southwest should be related rather definitely to a well-directed and well co-ordinated plan for this entire section. This could probably be brought about by organizing a Southwestern or far-Southwestern division of the National Council of the Inter-American Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, either independently or in conjunction with this Institute of World Affairs, or in some other suitable manner. Such a regional organization would stimulate greater educational co-operation with South American countries on the part of all of our colleges and universities, normal schools, and state departments of public instruction. It should make this program of social and cultural co-operation one of the leading objectives of all educational agencies in Texas, California, Arizona, and New Mexico. Surely our section of the United States, peopled by large elements of Spanish-speaking citizens, is the natural laboratory out of which should evolve the finest experiments in social and cultural relations with Latin-American nations.

As a representative of one of the educational institutions in this area, I present to this Institute the definite suggestion calling for a more intensive and better co-ordinated program for all the institutions of the American Southwest in the effort to advance the cause of better understanding between the Americas by a more intensive cultivation of the social and cultural elements in Pan-Americanism.