

Washington University Law Review

Volume 65

Issue 4 *Festschrift: A Celebration of the Scholarship and Teaching of Gray L. Dorsey*

January 1987

Towards a New Society

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Recommended Citation

Lino Rodriguez-Arias Bustamante, *Towards a New Society*, 65 WASH. U. L. Q. 839 (1987).

Available at: https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_lawreview/vol65/iss4/16

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VI. INTERCULTURAL CONFLICTS

Through the process of colonialization, Western European institutions and values were injected in Latin American countries. Though Latin American countries achieved political independence, European institutions and values continue to permeate the fiber of Latin American society. This European heritage, however, is an Iberian legacy. The liberal democracy that sparked revolutions and radical reforms in other European countries had little effect on Spain and Portugal. Accordingly, Latin American societies and legal systems have tended to reflect that hierarchical and dogmatic Iberian structure. Consequently, the political and economic activities of the United States government and businesses with the elites of Latin American countries have been characterized as "exploitative." Not surprisingly, Marxism-Leninism, which proclaims the "exploitative" character of "capitalist-ruled" states, has found some sympathetic ears. Professor Lino Rodriguez-Arias Bustamante, of the University of the Andes, Merida, Venezuela, has proposed a third approach. This proposal takes what is seen as the best of the two competing world cultures—the respect for the individual of the constitutional democracies and a communal spirit of solidarity and cooperation. The communal spirit, however, owes more to Jaques Maritain than to Karl Marx. A recent international symposium in Madrid and Merida honored Professor Bustamante and explored the implications of his social theory of "Communitarismo." Professor Dorsey has developed a high regard for Professor Bustamante both personally and professionally.

TOWARDS A NEW SOCIETY

LINO RODRIGUEZ-ARIAS BUSTAMANTE*

In disagreement with political and economic systems governing the world, we propose a new way of life having as a central preoccupation the exaltation of human life. In other words, we want to stress the social dimension of our fellow man (without, however, disregarding his individ-

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ual dimension) and make him the bearer of a message of spirituality and human solidarity to the world. We do not pursue an abstract kind of humanism—because this only portrays a faded and rootless man—but a concrete one that refers incisively to the human being. Nor do we pursue a humanism in isolation but one rooted in the communities and institutions in which man enters life and develops socially, affectively and spiritually. This is why our struggle had to be oriented toward building a thoroughly human society, made up of men not angels. We must strive to perfect history by means of the two concrete expressions of liberty: action and creation. For man has been made to love, to create and to understand.

Thus, we have trespassed the threshold of money and totalitarian pressures in order to encounter a *world for ourselves*, that we will reach the very day each individual discovers in each one of his fellow human beings a person and makes the commitment to treat him and know him as such. All this must be carried out in an atmosphere of solidarity where each individual is determined to raise the other above himself in the process. For this purpose we must develop a *Methodology of Love* that would allow us to understand our fellow man by means of what Mounier calls “taking charge” or what Martin Buber refers to as “alterity.” Either concept implies that we enter the mind frame of an “alter ego” so that we can comprehend the other person’s thought and vital “I.” In this manner we can dialogue with him and establish an intimate spiritual relationship of peace, order and justice. We are for the interactive man, not a utopian man, but a real man, with imagination and spirit, a man who assumes his active role in the world so that he can be what he must to achieve his distinct human personality. To do this, he has to follow an ethical behavior representative of his personal attributes and his human dignity. In this manner he will always be open to dialogue with his fellow human beings and with himself, carrying on the constant pursuit of the transcendency that is the basis of his happiness.

Obviously, from our fraternal position we oppose violence as a means to solve human conflicts. Despite the masks of selfishness and aggression behind which he sometimes hides, man is a rational being. We are convinced that through the labor of love, understanding, and moral strength we can overcome any antagonistic force. Thus we affirm the need to do away with social injustice through constructive criticism, discourse, and pressure to suppress the *established order*, subrogating it with a more human and communitarian order. This task concerns every man, with-

out distinction of sex, class, religion, or race. This task requires that all men unite in the effort to save today's society—already divided in irreconcilable sectors—from the chaos and destruction that flows from our pursuit of money, our passion for power, and our hatred.

Facing the disturbing and desolate scenario of contemporary society, we raise the flag of our struggle for a better society. A society that is more consonant with our ideals, inspired by love, the primary principle of human life. We have to turn spiritually to our fellow man and to all humanity in the effort to carry on a common objective that will allow the birth of that society for which we yearn. We as human beings belong to the world, despite the prevalent belief that we are just *in* it—as a dog could be in his dog house. We are this world. And because we are the world we play a significant part in any action and adventure as individuals, as conscientious beings, as the center of all temporal enterprises, and as an “Open Space” reflecting the image of the Absolute from whence our experience of personal freedom originates.
