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THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

HAIFA, ISRAEL

TO ALL NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

13 July, 1964

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

TEACHING THE MASSES

When the masses of mankind are awakened and enter the Faith of God, a new process is set in motion and the growth of a new civilisation begins. Witness the emergence of Christianity and of Islam. These masses are the rank and file, steeped in traditions of their own, but receptive to the new word of God, by which, when they truly respond to it, they become so influenced as to transform those who come in contact with them.

God's standards are different from those of men. According to men's standards, the acceptance of any cause by people of distinction, of recognized fame and status, determines the value and greatness of that cause. But, in the words of Bahá'u'lláh "The summons and Message which We gave were never intended to reach or to benefit one land or one people only. Mankind in its entirety must firmly adhere to whatsoever has been revealed and vouchsafed unto it." Or again, "He has endowed every soul with the capacity to recognize the signs of God. How could He, otherwise, have fulfilled His testimony unto men, if ye be of them that ponder His Cause in their hearts." In countries where teaching the masses has succeeded, the Bahá'ís have poured out their time and effort in village areas to the same extent as they had formerly done in cities and towns. The results indicate how unwise it is to solely concentrate on one section of the population. Each National Assembly therefore should so balance its resources and harmonize its efforts that the Faith of God is taught not only to those who are readily accessible but to all sections of society, however remote they may be.

The unsophisticated people of the world—and they form the large majority of its population—have the same right to know of the Cause of God as others. When the friends are teaching the Word of God they should be careful to give the Message in the same simplicity as it is enunciated in our teachings. In their contacts they must show genuine and divine love. The heart of an unlettered soul is extremely sensitive; any trace of prejudice on the part of the pioneer or teacher is immediately sensed.

When teaching among the masses, the friends should be careful not to emphasize the charitable and humanitarian aspects of the Faith as a means to win recruits. Experience has shown that when facilities such as schools, dispensaries, hospitals, or even clothes and food are offered to the people being taught, many complications arise. The prime motive

should always be the response of man to God's message, and the recognition of His Messenger. Those who declare themselves as Bahá'ís should become enchanted with the beauty of the Teachings, and touched by the love of Bahá'u'lláh. The declarants need not know all the proofs, history, laws, and principles of the Faith, but in the process of declaring themselves they must, in addition to catching the spark of faith, become basically informed about the Central Figures of the Faith, as well as the existence of laws they must follow and an administration they must obey.

After declaration, the new believers must not be left to their own devices. Through correspondence and dispatch of visitors, through conferences and training courses, these friends must be patiently strengthened and lovingly helped to develop into full Bahá'í maturity. The beloved Guardian referring to the duties of Bahá'í Assemblies in assisting the newly declared believer has written: "... the members of each and every Assembly should endeavour, by their patience, their love, their tact and wisdom, to nurse, subsequent to his admission, the newcomer into Bahá'í maturity, and win him over gradually to the unreserved acceptance of whatever has been ordained in the Teachings."

Expansion and consolidation are twin processes that must go hand in hand. The friends must not stop expansion in the name of consolidation. Deepening the newly-enrolled believers generates tremendous stimulus which results in further expansion. The enrolment of new believers, on the other hand, creates a new spirit in the community and provides additional potential man-power that will reinforce the consolidation work.

We would like to share with you some of the methods used by National Assemblies in various continents that have proved useful in teaching the masses, and attach a list. Certain of these may be valuable in your area, in addition to any methods you may yourself devise.

We are fervently praying that all National and Local Spiritual Assemblies, supported by the individual believers, will achieve outstanding success in the fulfillment of this glorious objective.

Please share this communication with all the friends,

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

(Signed and Sealed)

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE.

TEACHING THE MASSES

Annex

1. Materials are sent at once to the new believers. In some places this material is in the form of printed cards, mainly in color, portraying a Bahá'í theme or principle. This helps the new believer to know that his declaration has been accepted and to feel that he now belongs to the new Faith.

2. Training courses of about 2 weeks duration are held. To facilitate attendance and reduce cost, a number of villages are grouped together as one zone in which the course is held. The students to the courses are usually selected, so that the more capable participate, and teaching is facilitated. Transportation expenses, feeding and accommodation are provided, if it is found that the participants are unable to cover such expenses themselves. The material to be taught is prepared ahead of time, presented in simple language, and translated into the vernacular. After the course, the more promising students are picked out, and with their consent, are requested to undertake teaching projects for a limited period. It is sometimes found that long-term projects are also useful. These projects generally are carefully planned as to their duration, places to be visited and material to be taught. If the travelling teachers are not able to cover their expenses, travelling and living expenses are provided by the Fund for the execution of a given and temporary teaching project.

3. Shorter training courses in the form of conferences over a long week-end are held.

4. These activities—training courses and conferences—are repeated as frequently as possible and are not dependent upon the acquisition of Teaching Institutes. In the absence of such Institutes, these courses and conferences are normally held in Bahá'í homes or hired quarters, such as schools, etc. In order to facilitate the physical catering and accommodation of the participants they are sometimes asked to come to the course with their eating utensils and bedding.

5. In the visits made to the villages, the visiting teacher meets with the Local Communities to give them basic Bahá'í knowledge, such as living the Bahá'í life, the importance of teaching, prayer, fasting, Nineteen Day Feasts, Bahá'í elections, and contributions to the Fund. The question of contributions to the fund is of utmost importance, so that the new believers may quickly feel themselves to be responsible members of the Community. Each National Assembly must find ways and means to stimulate the offering of contributions, in cash or kind, to make it easy for the friends to contribute and to give proper receipts to the donors.

These are but suggestions based on experience which may help you in your efforts to teach and deepen the spiritually starved multitudes in your area.

In the course of carrying out such a tremendous spiritual campaign among the masses, disappointments will well be encountered. We tabulate a few instances that have been brought to our notice :

- (a) Visiting pioneers or teachers may find, in some places newly-enrolled believers not so enthusiastic about their religion as expected, or not adjusting to standards of Bahá'í life, or they may find them thinking of material benefits they may hope to derive from their new membership. We should always remember that the process of nursing the believer into full spiritual maturity is slow, and needs loving education and patience.
- (b) Some teaching committees, in their eagerness to obtain results, place undue emphasis on obtaining a great number of declarations to the detriment of the quality of teaching.
- (c) Some travelling teachers, in their desire to show the result of their services may not scrupulously teach their contacts, and in some rare cases, if, God forbid, they are insincere, may even give false reports.

Such irregularities have happened and can be repeated, but must not be a source of discouragement. By sending a team of teachers to an area, or by sending at intervals other teachers to those areas, and through correspondence and reports, such situations can be detected and immediately adjusted. The administration of the Faith must at all times keep in close touch with the teaching work.

To sum up :

1. Teaching the waiting masses is a reality facing each National Assembly.
2. The friends must teach with conviction, determination, genuine love, lack of prejudice, and in a simple language addressed to the heart.
3. Teaching must be followed up by training courses, conferences, and regular visits to deepen the believers in their knowledge of the Teachings.
4. The close touch of the National Office or Teaching Committees with the work is most essential, so that through reports and correspondence not only is information obtained and verified, but stimulation and encouragement is given.
5. Expansion and consolidation go hand in hand.

Message from the Universal House of Justice

July, 1964.

To the beloved of God gathered in the European Teaching Conference called on the occasion of the dedication of the Mother Temple of Europe.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

We have just witnessed the dedication of the Mother Temple of Europe—a project of untold significance and tremendous potential for the spread of the light of God's Faith in that Continent. One of the major achievements called for by our beloved Guardian at the outset of the Ten-Year Crusade, this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was triumphantly raised during its closing years as the fruit of long and arduous labours in the face of determined opposition and upon the sacrificial gifts of believers from all parts of the world. Now dedicated in the opening months of the Nine Year Plan, it forms a striking link between these two great crusades demonstrating afresh the organic progress of the Cause whereby the efforts exerted in one period bear fruit in the next, which in turn endow the Bahá'í Community with new and greater capacities for the winning of still greater victories.

You are now gathered in this Conference to deliberate on ways and means of accomplishing the goals which are set before you. Let every believer, as he considers in detail these various goals, bear in mind four supreme objectives : to carry the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to every stratum of society, not only in the towns and cities but also in the villages and country districts where the virus of materialism has had much less effect on the lives of men;

to take urgent, wise and well-considered steps to spread the Faith to those countries of Eastern Europe in which it has not yet become established ;

to reinforce strongly the heroic band of pioneers in the islands of the Mediterranean and the North Sea islands which are to play such an important role in the

awakening of the entire continent—as well as to prosecute energetically the goals you are called upon to achieve in other continents and oceans ;

and to foster the co-operation between National Communities and between National Spiritual Assemblies and the Hands of the Cause of God which has contributed so markedly to the work of the Faith on that continent and is so essential for its future development.

Above all let every European Bahá'í have ever present in his mind that these are the five years during which Bahá'u'lláh sojourned on the soil of that Continent a century ago. Let him resolve so to deepen his knowledge of the Faith and so to increase his standards of self-sacrifice and dedication to the Cause as to play his part in building a Community which will be worthy of this supreme bounty and which will be a beacon light to the peoples of this fear-wracked world.

In 1953 Shoghi Effendi wrote that the Continent of Europe had “at last at this critical hour—this great turning point in its fortunes—entered upon what may well be regarded as the opening phase of a great spiritual revival that bids fair to eclipse any period in its spiritual history.” Those who have been privileged to witness the extraordinary strengthening and consolidation of the Cause in Europe during the course of the last eleven years are well aware of the reservoir of spiritual potential that has been building up and the transformation of the life of the European Bahá'í Community that has ensued. May the completion and dedication of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár be the signal for the unleashing of this potential, bringing about on the European mainland and in the islands around its shores a quickening of the process of individual conversion comparable to those events which have transpired with such astonishing suddenness in other continents of the globe.

(Signed and Sealed)

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE.

THE NINE-YEAR PLAN

“Therefore let each of the sixty-nine communities seize its tasks, at once consider how best to accomplish them within the allotted span, raise its band of pioneers, consecrate itself to unrelenting labour and set out on its mission. Now is the golden opportunity.”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE.

The National Spiritual Assembly has taken the first step towards the accomplishment of the goals allotted to the British Bahá'í community by appointing the following National Committees to work under the general direction of the National Assembly.

1. ENGLISH TEACHING COMMITTEE

Membership—Kathleen Ackroyd (Secretary), Margaret Bachrich, Joe Jameson, Malcolm Lee, Gloria Momen and John Wade.

Terms of Reference :—

To be responsible for achieving the following goals :—

Open the Isle of Wight and Guernsey,

Re-open and establish a Group in the Isle of Man,

Increase the number of Local Assemblies so that there is one in every county in England and one each in the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands.

2. WELSH TEACHING COMMITTEE

Membership—Carl Card (Secretary), Eric Kent, Terry de Lacey, David Lewis, Florence Newman and Adib Taherzadeh.

Terms of Reference :—

To be responsible for achieving the following goals :

Raise the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies to six,

Enrich Bahá'í literature in Welsh.

3. SCOTTISH TEACHING COMMITTEE

Membership—Jock Cunningham, Dorothy Ferraby, Eric Helicar (Secretary), J. More Nisbett and Harold Shephard.

Terms of Reference :—

To be responsible for achieving the following goals:

Open the Inner Hebrides,

Raise the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies in Scotland to ten.

Form one Local Spiritual Assembly in the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands and the Outer Hebrides.
Enrich Bahá'í literature in Gaelic.

4. IRISH TEACHING COMMITTEE

Membership—Susan Bennett, George Bowers, Lisbeth Greeves, Peggy Harrison (Secretary) and Charles Macdonald.

Terms of Reference:

To be responsible for achieving the following goals:

Raise the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies to four in the Republic of Ireland and six in Northern Ireland.

Enrich Bahá'í literature in Erse,

Acquire a National Ḥaẓratu'l-Quds in Dublin,

Acquire a National Endowment in the Republic of Ireland,

Acquire a Temple Site in or near Dublin.

In addition to their specific tasks, each Teaching Committee will be called upon at some stage to assist in achieving the overall goals of the Home Front;

Raise the number of localities to 500 and

Incorporate thirty-four Local Spiritual Assemblies.

The Committees' relationship with existing assemblies and groups in their respective areas has two aspects,

(a) To give teaching assistance to Local Spiritual Assemblies and Groups needing it, and

(b) To seek their co-operation and assistance in achievement of the new goals.

The Teaching Committees are also responsible for Assembly maintenance assisted by the Pioneer Committee to whom requests for pioneers should be made.

5. AFRICA COMMITTEE

Membership—'Sue' Benetar, Ted Cardell, Elizabeth Chapman and Harry Charles (Secretary).

Terms of Reference:—

To be responsible for assisting the National Spiritual Assemblies in Africa, through close co-operation and consultation with their relevant committee or through other channels opened by them to achieve the following goals:

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of the Indian Ocean in opening Rodriguez Island,

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of West Africa in consolidating Sierra Leone,

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of West Central Africa in consolidating Dahomey, and in acquiring a National Ḥaẓratu'l-Quds in Victoria, Cameroon Republic.

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa in consolidating South West Africa.

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of South Central Africa in acquiring a National Ḥaẓratu'l-Quds in Blantyre/Limbe, Malawi.

6. CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICAN COMMITTEE

Membership—Dick Backwell, Vida Backwell (Secretary) and John Twiname.

Terms of Reference:—

To be responsible for achieving the following goals in British Guiana:

Raise the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies to four,

Raise the number of localities where Bahá'ís reside to 35,

Acquire a National Ḥaẓratu'l-Quds in Georgetown,

Acquire a National Endowment in British Guiana,

Acquire a Temple site in or near Georgetown,

Obtain from the civil authorities recognition of Bahá'í Holy Days and the Bahá'í Marriage Certificate.

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of Guatemala in establishing the National Spiritual Assembly of Belize, through close co-operation and consultation with their relevant committee or through any other channel opened to them.

7. EUROPEAN COMMITTEE

Membership—Owen Battrick, Betty Goode, Ken Goode (Secretary), and Dorothy Green.

Terms of Reference:—

To be responsible for achieving the following goals:

Establish at least two vigorously functioning Local Spiritual Assemblies in Cyprus,

Establish one Local Spiritual Assembly in Malta,

Establish one Local Spiritual Assembly in Faroes (assisted by the National Spiritual Assemblies of Denmark and Norway),

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of France in consolidating Corsica,

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy in consolidating Rhodes and Sardinia,

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain in consolidating the Balearic Islands,

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany in opening Cyclades Islands and consolidating Crete.

8. PACIFIC COMMITTEE

Membership—John Edwards, Bob Hallam (Secretary), and Betty Reed.

Terms of Reference:—

To be responsible for achieving the following goals:

Open the Line Islands,

Open the Phoenix Islands,

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of North-East Asia in consolidating Hong Kong,

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand in opening Tokelau Islands,

Assist the National Spiritual Assembly of South Pacific Ocean in consolidating Fiji and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.

9. PIONEER COMMITTEE

Membership—Vivienne Crook, Patrick Green, Kathleen Hyett (Secretary), Valerie Morley, Farhang Rameshni and John Wade.

10. SOUTHERN YOUTH COMMITTEE

Membership—Mehrdad Ardjomand, Philip Hinton-Lever, Irene Jones, Jyoti Munsiff (Secretary), Roger Prentice, Ron Stee and Peter Woodrow.

11. NORTHERN YOUTH COMMITTEE

Membership—Peter Fothergill, Carole Fothergill, Shidan Kouchezkadeh, Susan Kouchezkadeh, Bridget Ferraby, Iris Foster and John C. Turner.

12. SCOTTISH YOUTH COMMITTEE

Membership to be announced later.

13. IRISH YOUTH COMMITTEE

Membership—Ann Brew, Hushang Jamshidi, Colin King, Tony MacCarthy, Iain Macdonald and Barry Watson.

The Terms of Reference of all Youth Committees:—

To stimulate youth activities in their respective areas, particularly in assisting local Bahá'í youth in the field of attracting non-Bahá'í youth and in deepening Bahá'í youth in the Faith.