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Students Plan Posters For South America

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Students Plan Posters

For South America

Frances Kerekes tells of posters being made at Iowa State promoting health and nutrition in South America

"FIESTAS and religion form integral parts of the lives of South American Indians but, unfortunately, a knowledge of nutrition does not," according to Dr. Elizabeth Hoyt of the Economics and Sociology Department.

In many south-of-the-border regions where the United States is now sending army doctors and engineers, the inhabitants are totally ignorant of the proper methods of medical care, sanitation and planning of adequate diets.

The peons, who comprise 90 percent of the population of South America, are trained from their earliest years to a life of toil. Although the peons are religious almost to the point of fanaticism, they have no ambition and no form of intellectual recreation.

What can be done for these neighbors with whom we expect to have even closer relations following the war? Dr. Hoyt believes that the answer lies in educating the northern continent to the plight of these South Americans.

In a poster contest, which is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Hoyt and Dr. Janet K. Smith, head of the Applied Art Department, Iowa State students are finding the opportunity to contribute something tangible to this project.

Posters to be used in a South American health and nutrition campaign will be made by students competing for a cash prize. All those which are considered worthy, whether or not they receive prizes, will be forwarded to Washington, D. C. The final selections will be made there and sent to South America for the campaign. Some of the better posters may be reproduced by the thousands. Because the visual idea is more easily communicated the posters will be practical for use among the illiterate and uneducated people of these countries.

Several problems have been encountered in the poster project. For example, on a continent where the church is such a dominant factor, religious themes should have great influence. But exactly how they should be incorporated to avoid unknown taboos of the natives is a question of critical importance to the project.

The most basic problems come in relation to the small everyday objects which, although taken for granted here, are unknown or entirely different in South America. What kind of beds do the Indians sleep in? How do they dress? What kinds of pets do they have? What do their eating utensils look like? Questions like these must be answered before effective posters can be produced.

Another stumbling block is the language problem. The variety of dialects limits the posters' use, sometimes to a comparatively small area. This has been largely overcome, however, by the compilation of a list containing appropriate Spanish phrases. Some representative examples from the list are: save the baby, proteja el niño; the mosquito is a bad chum, el mosquito mal chico; we wash our faces, nos lavamos la cara; milk makes me strong, le leche me fuerte; boil the water, hierva el agua; kill the fly, extermina la mosca; eat fruits, come frutas.

South Americans have an excellent sense of humor and posters may take advantage of that fact. For example, the parrot who gives good advice, is a character beloved in that country and can be used effectively.

This project will be of value, Dr. Hoyt feels, even if none of the posters are accepted for use below the equator. For those who have worked on such a project there will be the reward of an increased knowledge of a relatively unknown topic as well as the satisfaction of having contributed to a growing movement of cooperation with our "good neighbors."