

Dr. Campbell



I.I.A.A.

BUILDING A BETTER HEMISPHERE SERIES NO. 25

Point IV
Vocational Education

IN PARAGUAY

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POINT 4 IN ACTION

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Point IV Vocational Educ

ROAD GRADERS abandoned by the side of the road with nobody available to put them back into running order . . . motorized equipment that stopped dead because of neglect . . . radios and refrigerators out of order and no repairmen to work on them . . . whole cities without a single well-trained plumber: — these are some of the situations uncovered by a survey that pointed up the desperate need for vocational training in Paraguay.

When the cooperative technical assistance program in vocational education that is now part of U. S. Point 4 began in Paraguay in 1945, one of the first steps was a survey to determine what kinds of training were needed to supply the particular workers the country lacked. Here is what the survey showed:

Although many Paraguayan roads were unpaved and needed frequent grading, three practically new road graders had been out of use for six months because nobody knew how to repair them.

Privately owned automobiles, motorcycles, and tractors were breaking down and being discarded because of the lack of proper maintenance. Bicycles, one of the favorite means of transportation, broke down and in many cases could not be repaired since few people were skilled in welding.

Even some of the largest cities had no central water supply and sewage systems. Groups of home owners cooperated to dig a well. Then each would install a septic tank and have his own plumbing system put in. Water usually could be found within 30 feet of the surface, but it wasn't pure enough to drink without being boiled. For safe drinking water, wells had to be drilled and cased. There was no plumbing code and few, if any, trained plumbers. In rural areas, safe water supplies and adequate sewage disposal systems were virtually nonexistent.

Many people owned radios — an important form of entertainment in the nation — but the sets were old models that often went dead because they needed repair.

Refrigeration was badly needed. Temperatures in Asuncion, the capital city, are approximately those of

Miami, Florida. Meat had to be butchered every day and families usually bought only what they could eat within a few hours. The relatively few refrigerators in the country were old models that needed frequent attention, but there were few people trained to keep them in running order.

Most of the furniture in Paraguay was made by rather crude methods. Furniture makers were untrained and poorly paid; yet the length of time required to fashion a piece of furniture made its cost prohibitive to those who needed it most.

Being a cattle raising country, Paraguay had a good supply of hides but they were being shipped to Argentina to be tanned, finished, and made into products like purses and belts. When these finished products were shipped back to Paraguay for sale, the average consumer was priced out of the market.

Here Is What Was Done

With this and other information at their disposal, the cooperative Vocational Education staff set about to establish a training program that would fit Paraguayan boys to take their places as skilled workmen in the fields in which they were most needed.

First, the government of Paraguay furnished land for a school in Asuncion and put up a group of buildings that would serve as training shops. Additional land was provided to take care of the school's expansion in the future.

A group of Paraguayans were selected from various trades to be prepared for instructors in the school. They were sent to the United

States for a year of further training, each in his own trade, and for special teacher training. Even before these prospective instructors returned to Paraguay, carefully selected U. S. specialists in the various fields of vocational education that would be included in the new school were sent to Paraguay to help the Paraguayan instructors get started.

Together the U. S. specialists and the Paraguayan instructors planned the layout of the shops and set up the courses of study. The necessary modern equipment, tools, and supplies were ordered from the United States and paid for from the joint fund maintained by the Paraguayan and U. S. governments.

The school opened for classes in March 1948 with training offered in automobile repair, cabinet making and carpentry, leathercraft, plumbing installation and repair, refrigerator repair, radio and phonograph repair, blacksmithing, welding, and weaving. Most of the shops were filled to capacity immediately.

Classes started with the U. S. specialists doing most of the teaching so that the Paraguayan instructors could observe the methods used. By degrees the Paraguayan teachers accepted responsibility for conducting the classes. At present, two U. S. vocational specialists are in Paraguay, chiefly as advisors in operation of the school and preparation of teaching materials.

Accomplishments

The first group of Paraguayan students graduated from the vocational school in 1950. By the end of 1952, approximately 150 boys had



Paraguayan students receive training on making school furniture.

tion in Paraguay . . .

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finished their training. Most of them are from the city of Asuncion, although some of them come in from the outlying districts. There are boys who walk from 7 to 12 miles each day to attend classes.

The students are intensely interested in their work; absence from class is uncommon. Students start almost totally unfamiliar with even the commonest tools like pliers and screwdrivers. But they learn fast because they want to learn and their parents want them to learn.

Most of the teaching is done on "live" jobs. For example, when the cooperative health and sanitation program—which began in Paraguay in 1942 and is now a Point 4 activity—built a home for the children of Hanson's disease, students in the plumbing class installed a complete water and sewage disposal system. Members of the plumbing class spend approximately 75 per cent of their time on outside jobs—and this in spite of the fact that their installations cost more, because they use better materials than others would use.

The same is true of radio and refrigerator repair. The boys go to the broken-down machines—or the owners bring them into the shops for repair. Members of the welding class have a variety of objects on which to work—bicycles, motorcycles, automobiles, tractors, and so on.

While little outside work of a similar type is done in the woodworking shop, the cabinetmaking students are doing practical jobs which train them to improve the methods and standards of the furniture-making trade.

Students of leathercraft are in real-

ity small manufacturers. They may be quite important in the future economic life of their country, since they are learning to make articles that can be exported to bring in badly needed foreign currency.

Many of the boys who graduate from the vocational courses open shops of their own. It has not been easy to work them into established Paraguayan industries for two reasons. First, they often know more about their trade than the man for whom they would work. And second, the Paraguayan industrialists have been slow to realize that these boys, who have been expertly trained, deserve higher wages than other less skilled workers in the plant. This situation is clearing up, however. Some factory owners are now sending selected boys to the school so that they will be well-trained career employees.

What of the Future?

During 1953, two additional shops will be completed and added to the school facilities. One will house a class in electricity where students will be given the theory and practice of house wiring for light and power as well as training in the repair and upkeep of all kinds of electrical equipment, for which there is a steadily increasing demand in Paraguay. The other shop will be equipped to teach the graphic arts. The instruction will prepare both youth and adults for efficient work as printers and operators of printing equipment including the off-set press.

As in the case of the other trades taught in the school, instruction in

these new shops will be given on real jobs as far as good teaching methods will permit. United States technicians are now being recruited to assist in setting up the training in electricity and the graphic arts. As soon as possible Paraguayan "asociados" will be oriented into the teaching positions.

Who Pays the Bill?

When the vocational education program first began in Paraguay, equipment had to be bought, scholarships had to be provided for Paraguayan instructors to study in the United States, and U. S. vocational specialists had to be sent to Paraguay to get the program started. At that time the U. S. government supplied the larger share of the cooperative operating fund. Paraguay's share has increased steadily, however, until at present the Paraguayan government is carrying practically all the financial load of operating the vocational training program, including the salaries of 27 persons on the training staff.

About Point 4

In Paraguay, as in other Latin American countries, Point 4 is a continuation of a cooperative technical assistance program that was begun in 1942. All U. S. Point 4 activities in the other Americas are directed by The Institute of Inter-American Affairs, which is the Latin American Regional Office for the Technical Cooperation Administration.

Each U. S. Point 4 project is planned only after it is requested by the government of the country in which it is to operate. An agreement is signed by that government and the government of the United States, represented by The Institute of Inter-American Affairs. This agreement sets up working plans for the project including the contributions of each government to the joint operating funds and to the technical staff.

The vocational training program in Paraguay is one example of how, under Point 4, United States technical know-how has been shared with our neighbors to the South in order to help them help themselves.

The author (second from right) trains students in the cutting of threads and wiping of lead joints in a plumbing shop.





Students learn to use, install, and repair radio and minor electrical equipment, as U. S. technician (seated) directs their training.

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