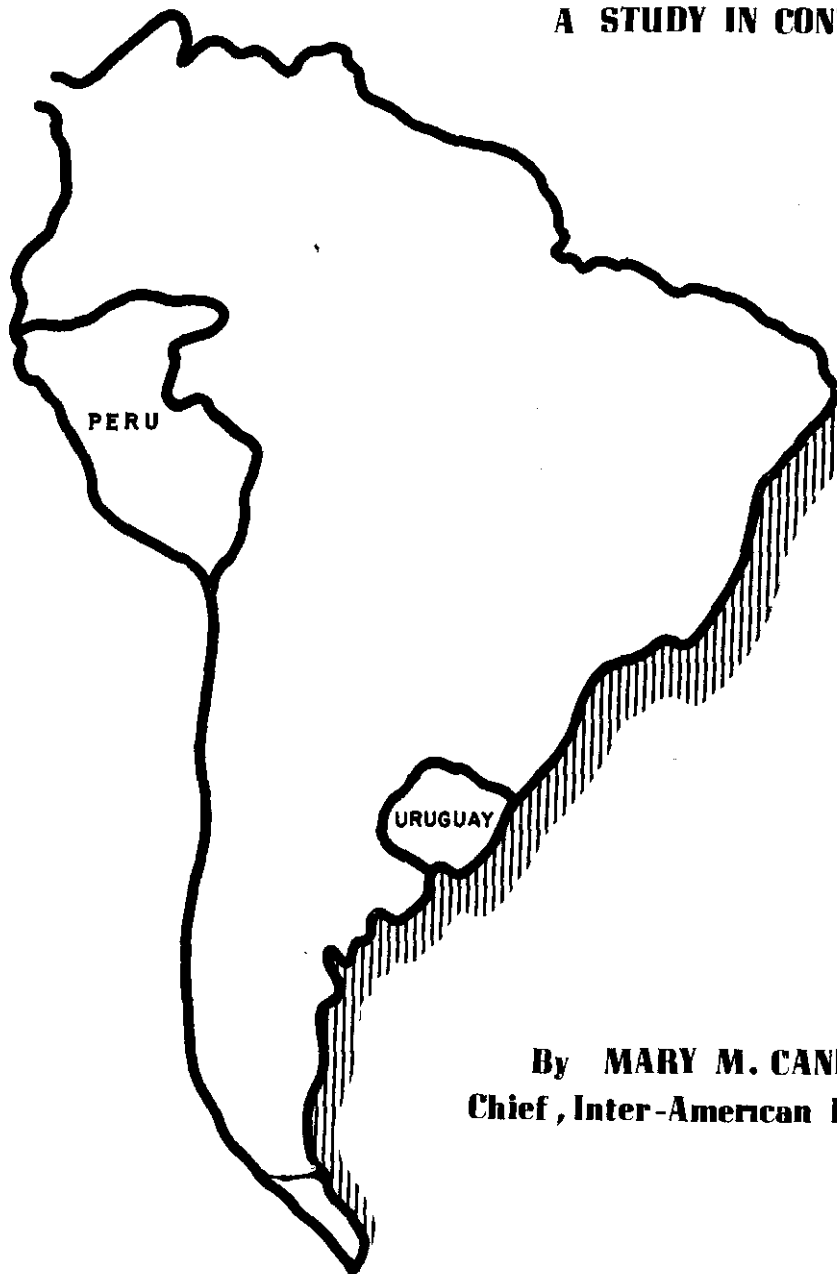


Social and Labor Problems of PERU and URUGUAY

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS



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This project of the Women's Bureau is part of the United States Government's program of cooperation with the other American Republics, and is carried out through the Interdepartmental Committee on Cultural and Scientific Cooperation of the State Department.

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SOCIAL AND LABOR PROBLEMS OF PERU AND URUGUAY

A Study in Contrasts

In the last few years we have read and heard a great deal about the raw materials and other supplies essential to the war that we are buying from the other American Republics. Without such vital materials as copper, vanadium, rubber, cinchona bark for quinine, feather-weight balsa wood for airplanes and life rafts, kapok, hides, quartz, manganese and so on through a long list, the amazing war production record of the United States would have been impossible.

We have realized how very important it was to have these countries as our allies in this war, how necessary to our safety and theirs for them to rid their countries of Nazi, Fascist, and Japanese spies and propagandists.

Before the war, tourist agencies and commercial firms were doing their best to interest us in the other American countries. Bright colored folders told of unparalleled scenery of lake and mountain retreats for vacations, of air trips across mountain ranges, of picturesque Indian markets in the interior of the countries. Department stores and shops advertised silver adornments with hand-wrought Inca designs, hand-woven and vegetable-dyed textiles, gay-colored baskets, soft deep-pile rugs. We were tourists in our outlook, interested in glimpsing the historical, the strange, the picturesque, and in finding attractive souvenirs.

Our war and prewar knowledge leave us knowing much less about the people of the other Americas than we know about vacation possibilities in their countries, potential markets for our manufactured goods and their raw materials. To know the people we must go deeper than tourists and traders, and try to understand the basic social and economic problems confronting the peoples of the Americas, and the methods by which they are trying to solve these problems. This approach is fundamental if we, the people, are to understand each other.

"We have four fundamental problems--more schools, better wages, better housing, better health and sanitation. If we could tackle all four of those problems at once we could make general progress quickly." I have been told this again and again by citizens of the seven South American countries, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador, which I have visited over a period of three and a half years as a representative of the Women's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor. Those problems, of course, vary in degree from country to country.

At the risk of oversimplifying in order to be concrete, I want to take the problems of two countries, Peru on the West Coast and Uruguay on the East Coast, as studies in contrasts. Narrowing the subject still more, I shall direct attention particularly to the social conditions of women in those two countries since there is no truer social barometer of a country than the position of its women.

PERU

Geography and Population

Larger than Texas, California, and Michigan combined, Peru faces the Pacific, and ranks third in size among the nations of South America. The country may be divided into three distinct regions: (1) the coastal region, the area of petroleum and agricultural products, arid desert except where it is irrigated or where it is cut by sudden green fertile valleys watered by small rivers which seldom reach the sea; (2) the Sierra, i.e., the Andean mountain region, rich in minerals, made up of high plateaus and deep valleys which are fertile; (3) the selva or, as the Peruvians call it, the "montana," the heavily forested eastern mountain slopes and tropical lowlands lying beyond them; lowlands which produce rubber, coffee, tea, fruits, and quantities of other foodstuffs. Dominating all the regions are the high Andes Mountains separating the coastal region from the selva, making communication difficult. There have been two principal railroads, one connecting the port of Callao with the mining region, the other serving southern Peru and linking it with Bolivia.

Highways have been built in the coastal region and in 1935 the Central Highway was built to connect the coast with the mining region. Recently, this road was extended to the selva. The fact that this highway crosses the Andes at altitudes of 14,000 to 16,000 feet gives some idea of the obstacles which highway engineers face in Peru and also of the expense of road building. There is a road now connecting Lima and Arequipa, an important city in the southern part of Peru. The trip by car or bus takes 3 or 4 days with overnight stops; the trip by plane is about four hours. There is no railroad. The usual way of travel between Lima and Arequipa was by boat between the port cities of Callao and Mollendo. It is possible now to go by car over mountain roads from Lima to Cuzco, the center of the old Inca civilization and an important interior city today. There are other roads connecting towns formerly almost inaccessible.

The 1940 Census gives the total number of inhabitants of Peru as 7,023,111, of whom 350,000 were estimated as the number living in the jungle, or the "selva."

The population make-up is significant--almost 53 percent are white and mestizo (mixed white and Indian), 46 percent Indian. It has been estimated that about 10 percent are of the white race. Six of Peru's 23 departments, corresponding to our States, have more than 79 percent white and mestizo; while 5 have more than 70 percent Indian.

The Peruvian Indians of today, whose ancestors developed the advanced Inca civilization, are descended from the Aymara and Quechua races and those languages are spoken by a large proportion of the Indian population.

Smaller in numbers than the white minority, the yellow race with 41,945, according to the 1940 Census, is nonetheless a significant group. Hubert Herring estimated in his book "Good Neighbors" (1941) that there were 25,000 Japanese.

In the main the geographical and population factors to be remembered are:

- (1) The geography of Peru makes communication extremely difficult; isolates sections of the country and of the people from each other;
- (2) The population make-up creates only a slight majority of white and mestizo, and in this slight majority of the population is found by far the greatest wealth and power of the nation; the controlling force in government and in the national economy is in the hands of the small white population group.

The Indigenous Population.

Spanish "conquistadores" and then the early Spanish settlers brought the old feudal system of rule to Peru as to other South American countries. The Indians were reduced to a state of serfdom. Strong traces of the feudal system remain in the large land holdings, in low wages, bad living conditions. Articles and novels have been written about the "communal organization" in which the Indians still live, and about the exploitation they have endured.

There is a difference of opinion about prejudice against the Indians. Some say the prejudice is sharpest on the part of the "cholos" or mestizos; others that there are no barriers except economic ones. Several times I was told "But in your country (the United States) you don't have the problem of two races as we do." Surprised, I asked what the second race is, and the answer was "the Indians." I asked a leading medical and university man who claims to be of direct Indian descent about this statement. He said that such prejudice is not widespread, that the Indians are Peruvians and there is no problem of two races. In the publication of the 1940 Census, it is stated that racial prejudice is diminishing and tending to disappear altogether.

No one would deny that the great majority of Indians still live in poverty with no semblance of adequate housing, with not enough to eat, weakened by disease and the use of alcohol and coca, and are illiterate. Yet from the Peruvian-Indians have come many men and women who are making splendid contributions to science, the arts, and the economic development of their country. The comments of a North American who has known Huancayo (always spoken of as an Indian city) over a period of 20 years are worth attention. She has observed signs of change in the Indian population which she considers significant: They are cleaner, they are acquiring furniture for their homes, and there is more interest in education for their children. As one illustration she cited an Indian couple employed in their household who had decided that instead of buying an additional piece of land, which is the most valued possession of the Indians, they would keep their savings and increase them so that their children could go to school, perhaps even to the university at Lima. This represents a fundamental change in values. A goodly percentage of the students in San Marcos University are of Indian and mestizo background.

I visited a normal school in Huancayo which was in its second year. The attractive young women students were mostly from the rural areas where schools and teachers are needed so badly, and 80 of the 136 lived at the school. The director, who was dedicating her life to educational work, said her most difficult problem with the students was with cleanliness and personal hygiene.

On an hacienda close to Huancayo, I saw a typical tiny adobe hut of the Indian workers. It had a thatched roof, one low door, no windows, a corral attached for the animals, dirt floors, and no furniture.

Indigenous women in the rural areas do a great deal of the work. I saw them grading potatoes at which they earned about one-third of the lowest factory wage paid in the nearby city. They work in the fields, produce crops on their small pieces of land and take them to markets to sell. They spin and weave cloth, ponchos, and blankets, make the clothing for the family.

Many Indian families are not legalized either by civil or church marriages. Several explanations are given. First, that the Indians are not yet impelled by the white man's institutions; wedding ceremonies performed by the church and formal marriage records have not become part of their social pattern; also priests are not always accessible to those living in remote regions. This custom of not having a civil or church marriage exists among poorer people in cities and towns as well as in the rural areas. Women are frequently left with the children to care for as best they can. It was stated that illegitimacy is now 45 percent instead of 55 percent as it was some years ago.

Dismal as all this may seem, the Indian women in person are far from dismal. Their faces have strength and beauty. At the Huancayo "feria," the market on Sunday, they present a colorful sight in their traditional Indian dress never to be forgotten. The women wear long, full, bright-colored skirts of orange, purple, or green and embroidered blouses. White straw, or round darker-colored felt hats usually cover part of their black hair, worn in two braids. They carry their babies--also their vegetables--on their backs in hand-woven squares of brilliant colors. The produce the women sell is brought to market in trucks, on llama back, or is carried on their own backs--some of the women come for long miles.

Some of the Indian population works in industry too. There is a large woolen mill in Huancayo employing over a thousand workers, the majority of them Indians. Many of them come in from the country where they own small pieces of land, and 15 to 20 percent leave their employment during the year to plant and harvest their crops, returning to their factory jobs after harvest time. Most of the Peruvians employed in the Cerro de Pasco mines are Indians. Women work above ground sorting ore. The Indian women and men make beautiful materials on their hand looms in their own communities. The Peruvian Government had an elaborate plan for establishing a weaving village where fine woolen cashmeres would be made. Other handicrafts too were encouraged.

The Government of Peru some years ago recognized the Indian "communities" as sociological units and included in the Constitution of 1933 special guarantees to them. The units have legal guarantees of property rights (of their land-holdings), absolute autonomy in the administration of their finances; and

provisions were made for the education and the economic improvement of the indigenous population. An office of Indian Affairs was established to look after the interests of the Indian population, to enforce legislation, to conciliate disagreements, to improve educational and employment opportunities. In 1942, traveling missions were created by government decree. These missions were composed of five specialists in teaching, agriculture, stock-raising, health, and industrial arts. The missions remained for brief periods of time in each community. In the last 10 years, the number of schools, including technical schools, has been considerably increased in areas where the majority of the population is Indian. Social security has been established, handicraft industries have been encouraged and made more profitable, and roads have been built.

Roads are an important factor in improving the lot of the Indians. When they realized that they were not forbidden to ride on the busses as the Spaniards had forbidden them to ride horseback, and that they could travel many miles for 20 centavos, they began to leave the haciendas where they were exploited and underpaid. A minimum wage was established for the Indian agricultural workers; if food is given to the worker by the employer, the cost of such food must never exceed what can be earned. If the Indian worker is in debt to the employer, neither his person nor his animals can be garnisheed.

In an article, "Peru and Tomorrow" which appeared in the June 1944 Inter-American Monthly, Emilio Romero of Peru has ably summed up Peru's "Indian problem" ---

"Apart from her economic problems, Peru has a serious social situation which must be considered in working out the country's future.

"Almost half of the population are Indians, most of them illiterate. The 'Indian problem' has inspired many speeches, proposed programs, and books, but not a great deal of action. This is not due to the Peruvians' unwillingness to better the Indian's lot, but to the difficulty of agreeing on a method of 'Redeeming the Indian.' Some believe that teaching the Indian to read and write is paramount; others, that literacy is futile to those living in economic quasi-slavery, that a lasting solution is impossible until the economic problem is solved.

"Endless discussions on the subject brought the title of 'pro-Indigenista' and brilliant careers to many people, but brought little to the Indian. Everyone agreed only that the term 'Indian problem' was a misnomer, that it was really the white man's problem.

"Meantime, the Indian continued to be a good farmer and a good worker, as he had been for centuries.

"Many years ago, a North American Evangelical mission was established on the shores of Lake Titicaca. The mission sprinkled the region with schools and trained hundreds of Indians as teachers. Eventually, the Indians asked the Government to give them schools as provided for in the Constitution. Today it is mostly the adult Indians who are illiterate. More and more Indian children are learning to read in the rural schools, some of which are financed by the Government, others by the Indian communities.

"The Indian presented by the Peruvian novelist, Circ Alegria, in 'Broad and Alien is the World', is shown in a phase long since passed in Peru. This book is now a true picture only of the remote highlands, where no roads penetrate. In regions less remote, the Indian is either being assimilated, becoming a mestizo, or is improving his position by the higher wages paid in modern industries.

"Indian labor is replacing cholo (half breed) labor. For example, the cholos and whites have gone from the fields of Arequipa to the Chilean salt mines and to the Bolivian tin mines; they have been replaced by Indians who no longer wear the poncho, traditional garment of their race."

Women and Social Problems

A brief review such as this one of Peru's social and labor problems can do no more than give a passing nod of recognition to the many other phases of Peruvian life which represent deep cultural roots, artistic achievement, and modern adaptation. There is a remarkable sense of progress and new enterprise in Peru, set against a background of Spanish colonial traditions.

These two tendencies, the Spanish colonial and the contemporary, are strongly reflected in the women. The social conventions brought by the Spaniards still influence their lives. I met unusually interesting, alert, and progressive women in Peru. There is a relatively small number of professional women (outside of teachers) but an increasing number in the universities, in spite of the fact that sometimes women students have difficulty getting their final theses accepted because they are women.

Some of the women leaders in Lima offer sharp contrast to the Indian women at Huancayo. The projects they sponsor indicate their awareness of some of the larger problems facing the country.

The members of the Council of Women are from the upper-income, aristocratic families of Spanish or other European origin. Like most of the wealthy women of Peru, the majority of these women have attended private Catholic schools and studied with private tutors. They manage their homes admirably and well, but servants do the housework and cooking; nursemaids and governesses take care of the children; and chauffeurs, house and yardmen free the ladies of the house from the actual work. The president of the Council of Women is the principal of a school for girls, which was owned by her until recently when the Government agreed to assume responsibility for the school. The Council has worked to improve wages for women. At one time it took over for the army the distribution of materials to home workers who made the military uniforms, thus eliminating the price of the middlemen and raising the wages which the women received. It served as a volunteer censorship committee for motion pictures and has worked on other social improvement projects.

The program of Catholic Action in Lima is concerned with giving moral instruction and teaching the Catholic catechism to women of poorer workers' families. There were a few classes in reading and writing and knitting. A great deal of importance is attached to getting the parents of children married, to achieving regularly constituted homes.

The Catholic Action Society in Arequipa, was asked by the school doctor in 1934 to serve breakfasts to undernourished school children. The project is financed now by the Government but Catholic Action volunteers direct the four lunch rooms in different parts of the city. In 1942, they gave breakfasts to 1,800 children daily. (It happens frequently that volunteers start such projects and prove their value to the Government, which will then provide the necessary funds.)

There are workshops where girls from poorer families learn to machine-knit sweaters, to make rugs on hand looms, to sew and embroider, to train for domestic service. Night classes for girls 16, 17, and 18 are given in dress-making and typing. One center has as many as 800.

A young woman in Arequipa, director of a private school, told me of a public night school for women which she helped start in 1935. About 450 women who are office, factory, and shop employees, dressmakers, home women from 16 to 60 years of age, go five nights a week from 6:30 to 9:30 o'clock. A third of the students were in reading, writing, and arithmetic classes. There are other classes in child care, hand work, and dressmaking. The director said it was a joy to teach in the school because the girls and women are so eager and determined to learn.

The story of two sisters, who are teachers, is a good illustration of one attack on social problems and of the imaginative, heroic work being done by many teachers in these countries. In 1918, two sisters, after completing their education in Spain, returned to their home in the interior town of Iquitos, up the Amazon River. There they started a kindergarten for underprivileged children age two to seven. This school was so successful that the National Government called them to Lima to establish similar schools there and in other sections of the country. The story of the difficulties that preceded the final establishment of such a school in Lima, is full of drama. There was a revolution and change of government and the new government was not interested in kindergartens. Down to the last centavo for their own living expenses, the sisters finally determined to start the much-needed kindergarten in a public park with six straw mats as their complete equipment. At first there were a dozen children, and people looked on in amazement at the work and play of the children and young teachers. Later they were more impressed with the special exhibition of work of 75 children at the end of the year. After that the public authorities were convinced of the value of the kindergarten. Now the school has its own building and there are over 500 youngsters who come every day. Nutrition and hygiene classes are held several times a week for mothers of the children. The original kindergarten in Iquitos is housed in five buildings, four of them paid for by public subscription. There is another farther in the Amazon section, in the jungle, to which some of the children come by canoes.

Accion Femenina Peruana (Peruvian Women's Action Association) has a cross-section membership with a few, very few, of the wealthy; some women who are writers and radio commentators, several social workers, professors, teachers working in public and private schools, office and factory employees, industrial home workers, and home women. They say that their chief aim is to secure justice for women. The group in Arequipa was giving classes for the women's section of the Trade Union Federation, had free legal advisory service, was working to secure a vocational or trades school for girls and women. The association in Lima had night classes for women. Some of the members were giving two nights a week to teach illiterate adults to read. The organization sponsored a cooperative for industrial home workers who had been earning almost nothing from their sewing and who needed the money desperately. From their slender funds the Lima Association had established a workroom where women were knitting garments for the children of the Allies. On Pan American Day, April 14, 1944, they presented their first shipment to the wife of the British Ambassador for children in England.

The president of the Association of Commercial Employees, with 200 women members in Lima, is typical of employed girls. She dresses well, has a charming personality; she is keen, alert, and efficient. She said that about 10 years ago there were office girls who came to work wearing their mantillas so that the neighbors would think they were going to Mass, not to work. However, a small number of women have worked in offices for years—the first president of the Association, now retired, started working 35 years ago.

The director of the Lima High School reported that graduates from the commercial courses, many of them from poorer families, had been able with their wages to raise the standard of living of their families and help keep younger brothers and sisters in school.

Women work too in factories in Peru, because they need the money for themselves and for their families. I visited a number of factories employing women—textiles, pharmaceutical, metal working, confectionery, leather goods, laundries.

Industrial home work exists in Peru as it does in all South American countries. Commercial houses, as well as the Army and Navy, give out home work. Dressmaking shops abound. There is legislation requiring the same rate of pay for home work as for factory work, but enforcement is always difficult and exploitation easy.

Social Insurance

The most outstanding achievement to improve social conditions is the social insurance system of Peru. The law of 1936 and 1937 includes all but clerical workers; it has not yet been applied to domestic employees who would come within the law. It covers sickness, maternity, disability, old age, and death. The worker may insure his family with a small additional payment.

The plan is financed by the Government, by taxes paid by the employer and the worker on pay rolls and wages, from additional taxes levied on tobacco and alcoholic drinks, from fines for certain law infractions, from legacies, donations, etc.

Hospitals and clinics are being erected in centers throughout the country, and medical assistance posts are established at greater frequency. Some hospitals are functioning. The Workers' Hospital in Lima is a beautiful modern institution well kept and rendering fine service.

The large majority of all those insured in 1941 were agricultural workers, and, according to the Peruvian Social Security Agency, this type of worker was most in need of social security benefits.

Low-Cost Housing

Low-cost housing projects have been built by the Government and an official housing-inspection service has secured improvements in hundreds of privately-owned buildings. Up to 1941 there were three projects for industrial workers in Lima, with 366 family units. The houses of one project, called "La Victoria," are built around a large recreation field which has a swimming pool at one end. A social worker and a physical education director are employed for this project. Other cities, like Callao, the port city, and Arequipa, have houses for workers also. When one project of 140 units was opened, over 2,000 applications were received.

Low-Cost Restaurants

The first low-cost restaurant was opened in Lima in 1934. In 1941 there were three in Lima, one in Callao, and one in Oroya, the mining center. In 1940 and the first five months of 1941, more than 2½ million meals at 20 and 30 centavos were served. Over 5 million breakfasts and lunches were given free of charge to school children, and meals were also furnished to welfare and other institutions. Plans were under way for establishing additional restaurants for commercial employees and students. 1/

Scarcities caused by the war and by transportation difficulties have increased the cost of food and other supplies. This, added to an already low standard of living, created serious difficulties for working people. The Government set up price controls, bought foodstuffs and retailed them directly, and required a certain percentage of the arable land to be used for rice and other foodstuffs instead of crops like cotton which produce higher profits.

Peru is increasing her efforts to improve health and sanitation through various projects, some with the cooperation of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. Work is also being done to develop production of staple foods.

1/ Restaurants for commercial employees and students have been established since June 1943 in Lima and Callao. Meals are served for 1 sol to clerical workers, for 60 centavos to students, and the restaurants are extremely popular.

Labor Problems

The workers, the Peruvian Labor Department, and management each has its interpretation of labor problems. The workers when asked put first the problem wages, then the right to organize in a union. Next come the "speed-up", that is the increase of the work load, then the undemocratic treatment of workers by some managers, (in some instances by foreign managers).

The Conciliation Service of the Peruvian Department of Labor said that the largest number of cases that come to their office concern wages and clauses in collective agreements which are not observed. For instance, complaints brought in against a company owning a sugar plantation in Peru, included wages, the methods of weighing sugar cane, housing on the plantation, the night school for adults. All of these matters were provided for in clauses in a collective agreement, yet the employer was not observing them.

According to the Director of the Labor Department, most companies from the United States have good labor policies in Peru and the Department has good cooperation from United States firms except for a few unfortunate instances. The opinion is that foreign firms are apt to have labor difficulties because often managers do not know Spanish, cannot work directly with their Spanish speaking personnel, do not understand the temperament of the people, do not or will not understand the spirit as well as the letter of labor legislation, and when the firms depend on lawyers who may interpret grievances solely from a legalistic or opportunistic point of view instead of that of good labor relations. Peruvian Labor Department officials believed that many difficulties with foreign firms were caused by lawyers, sometimes Peruvians, who were more interested in making their jobs secure by saving the company money than in a just interpretation of the labor laws and collective agreements.

The practice of paying higher wages to foreigners than to nationals, particularly engineers and skilled workers, who are doing the same kind of work side by side, creates difficulties and hard feelings. Wage differentials for men brought from the United States may be necessary but the practice is not easy for nationals to accept.

Management has labor problems also; among them are high absenteeism and turnover, the scarcity of skilled workers accustomed to industrial discipline and lack of ambition among new workers.

In Lima, relatively few women were employed in the cotton textile mills-- in contrast to the large number used in other places. For instance in one cotton mill, having a total employment of 400, only 28 were women. The company was replacing women with men as fast as possible. In another mill there were only 15 women in a total of 720 workers. Whatever the causes, the situation results in very real hardship for many women who need to work.

Labor Legislation

Labor legislation includes provisions covering holiday and Sunday work, vacations, hours, maternity benefits, and collective bargaining. Work on Sundays, civic holidays, and the first day of elections is prohibited. Annual paid vacations of from 13 to 15 days are granted to manual workers and one month to clerical employees.

The work week is limited to 48 hours for men with time over 8 hours in any one day to be paid at the rate of time and one-fourth. Women may not work more than 45 hours a week, but must be paid for 48 hours. They may work 8 hours for five days and only 5 hours on Saturday, but they must be paid for the full 8 hours.

Women are given maternity leave with pay before and after confinement.

A separation wage upon dismissal, based on each year's service after a trial employment of 3 months, is guaranteed. This is in lieu of any unemployment compensation.

Wages and work tools, including vehicles, cannot be taken in payment of debts. Several years ago, the Government appropriated funds to buy back sewing machines which women had been using in industrial home work and which they had lost because they could not meet the payments.

The right of association is guaranteed. Workers' mutual benefit associations and trade unions must be registered with the Labor Department. All unions are required to submit their charters and by-laws for approval by the authorities. School teachers are prohibited from joining a union. The most important teachers' organization is a limited mutual aid society which provides insurance, pension, housing, credit, and hospitalization services to its members.

Labor Movement

Textile employees, railway workers, and chauffeurs have the strongest trade unions. These are organized in national federations--but no strong national confederation exists at the present time. There are evident reasons for the lack of a strong national movement. Peruvian industry and manufacturing of the modern type is concentrated in the neighborhood of Lima, Arequipa and the Republic's principal port, Callac. In other cities craftsmen working alone still represent a considerable part of the working population. Also a large part of the working population is to be found in the mines of the interior where the workers are largely Indians. Illiteracy, lack of contact with the trade union movement, and inexperience in organized action, have retarded trade union development.

Labor legislation, and in various cases the employers themselves have established some of the practices that have been won through the bargaining power of labor in other countries. Certain of the largest industries--oil, mining, textiles, for example--are owned by foreign capital, chiefly United States and British. Opposition among these companies to trade union organization, together with other factors just mentioned, has helped to keep a national labor movement from developing. Compulsory arbitration in collective labor disputes was introduced by a government decree in 1942. So far as I could learn and was able to observe, a good relationship exists between the Labor Department officials and union leaders.

Summary

Here, then, are some of South America's social and labor problems as typified by Peru:

A mountainous country, rich in natural resources, with limited transportation and communication facilities leaving sections and people isolated from each other.

A potentially wealthy country requiring large investments of money, equipment, and skills to develop its possibilities.

Exploitation of raw materials still accounts for a large share of the industrial economy but manufacturing, particularly of consumers' goods, has increased substantially in recent years; the expanding manufacturing industries are all traditional woman-employing industries.

A country of few European influences other than that of Spain; the Spanish colonial cultural pattern for women has persisted down to the present time with fundamental changes developing only with the past decade.

A large Indian population assimilated into the full life of the Nation to a degree somewhat greater than in colonial times.

A high rate of illiteracy and levels of health and nutrition which sharply reduce the productive ability of the working population.

That Peru, like other South American countries, is fully aware of its problems as well as its achievements, and is determined to find solutions, is ample evidence that there already exists the courage, persistence, and vision necessary to transform hopes into realities.

URUGUAY

Uruguay presents in sharp focus other social and economic characteristics of South America. North Americans know all too little about Uruguay although we should know it as a good friend, staunch in its practice of democracy and a supporter of the allied cause in two World Wars. Even in the brief heyday of South American cruises, tourists were apt to omit Uruguay or at best take 12 hours shore leave in Montevideo. To the tourists, the wide avenues of Montevideo, or the narrow streets in the older parts of the city, the parks, the beautiful beaches are not as glamorous as the tropical beauty of Rio de Janeiro. It seems to them more like Milwaukee with a Spanish accent.

Geography and Population

Smallest of the South American Nations, with an area slightly larger than that of the State of Washington, Uruguay occupies a strategic position between Argentina and Brazil on the Atlantic Coast at the mouth of the Rio de la Plata. Including the ocean and the navigable river it has a coast line of 700 miles. Its beaches are the summer playground of Argentines and Brazilians and the year-round playground of the Uruguayans.

Uruguay is a plains country, rolling and fertile, with a dependable rainfall and equable climate. Low-lying hills rise from the plains in the northern part of the country. There are no mountains, deserts, or jungles to form barriers for transportation and communication or to sectionalize the population. There are no important mineral or coal deposits.

Less than three million people live in Uruguay, about a third of them in Montevideo. More than nine out of ten are of European background, chiefly Spanish, possibly a third Italian. There is a considerable number of Portuguese-Brazilians, a sprinkling of French, of Germans, a few Negroes, some British, and a smaller number from the United States. The population is overwhelmingly white and predominately European in outlook as well as background. There is no problem of a "population within a population." Uruguayans are a vigorous, industrious, people.

Uruguay is a country with a large middle class, without wide gaps between the very rich and the very poor. The standard of living is high and the rate of illiteracy is low.

Thus neither the population make-up nor the geography create social problems for Uruguay of the size and complexity faced by Peru.

Government

Uruguay seems content to consign its violent eras to the history books and to use the weapons of free speech and free press for its modern battles. For years the country has had a stable government, democratic except during part of the regime of President Terra who, during the depression, considered a strong central government essential to the economic recovery which the people sought and needed. The new constitution is a liberal charter. There is universal

compulsory suffrage. All citizens eighteen years and older, including women, must vote. In the 1942 regular elections women were elected both to the Senate and the House.

Divorce is legal; the church and State are separate; and the State assumes responsibility for free education of citizens of all ages.

Industry

With no important deposits of coal, iron, or petroleum Uruguay lacks power resources for industry. Large scale development of hydro-electric power in the Rio Negro Valley is expected to compensate for much of this deficiency. Nevertheless manufacturing has been developing in Uruguay in the consumer goods industries, with meat packing in first place and employing the largest number of workers. Other food-processing industries, building, construction, woolen textiles, and highway construction follow in importance. Smaller in volume but important to the national economy are glass factories, ceramics plants, shoe factories, and similar light manufacturing. In all the principal industries except construction women are employed extensively.

Agriculture

Stock raising has always been and still is the basic industry of Uruguay. In a way this is a disadvantage for the country, because it continues the system of large land holdings and gives employment to only a relatively small number of workers. Crop acreage has increased in the last decade and, even with the extensive use of farm machinery, this has resulted in a larger number of persons engaged in agriculture.

Rural Problems

Uruguay has needed immigration for years. In the last part of the 19th Century the Government offered to immigrants aid in finding work and free transportation to their destinations. But land, the finest inducement, was lacking. The Government had practically no desirable land to offer for colonization, and expropriation of the large estates was out of the question. There are few large estancias on the Argentine scale but the desirable land has long since been taken up in smaller holdings which would still seem large to a New England farmer. At the recent International Labor Conference in Philadelphia, the Government delegate from Uruguay said that his country is ready to receive regular contingents of European immigrants provided that they would engage in rural work and not stay in the cities. Uruguay wants immigration worked out under international controls. But the same problem of land available for small farms still exists.

Steps have been taken to improve the conditions of workers on the large estancias or farms but serious difficulties persist. A minimum wage has been established for rural workers and they are included in the social security system. The old age pension is not sufficient for entire support, but enables the individual to make a contribution to the household in which he lives.

A government decree of 1940 establishing better employment standards for workers in rice fields indicates the conditions which the Government was trying to change. The decree required that not more than 8 persons be lodged in one room, that water and sanitary facilities be provided, and that a 60-day notice be given before families could be evicted from dwellings provided by employers.

A Uruguayan lawyer-professor who has given much attention to rural conditions said bluntly that "living conditions for the peons in general are not good." He pointed to a strange anachronism which complicates any effort to raise living standards and stabilize rural family life. The workers are not allowed to have their families with them on the large estancias or ranches. Gate keepers are the only exceptions. This is a hang-over from gaucho traditions when the cowboy was an unmarried migrant. The unnatural situation which results is that the women and children live in villages close to the estancias, the women working as laundresses for the estancias or doing whatever work they can find in order to supplement the men's wages. Some of the workers now are permanent. Others are migrants, following the sheep-shearing in the spring, then the wheat harvest; for about four months they have no work.

The high rate of illegitimacy in these rural areas, sometimes as much as 49 percent of the births reported, is amorality rather than immorality, according to this same rural authority. He also called attention to the fact that sanitation is deficient, tuberculosis high.

Illiteracy is higher in the rural areas than in the cities although Uruguay, along with Argentina, has the lowest rate of illiteracy in Latin America. It has been difficult to get good teachers for the rural areas and for the children to get to the schools over unpaved country roads in bad weather.

Housing

Uruguay for a number of years has taken steps to increase housing facilities for low-income families. The crowding of large families into one or two rooms, and of a number of families into one building where it is necessary to use the same sanitary facilities, where there is no privacy, creates social problems.

Low-cost housing instituted by the Government in 1937 helps alleviate this situation, particularly in Montevideo. The National Housing Institute, a government agency, constructs low-cost dwellings for rental or sale, as well as public baths, public laundries, clinics, and athletic fields. One thousand homes have been built. The newer houses are semi-detached three- and four-room bungalows of solid construction with space for gardens, playgrounds, and parks. The National Housing Institute is also directed to carry on an educational campaign, promote private construction, and repair buildings.

Low Cost Restaurants

In 1932 during the economic depression in Uruguay, the Government started to provide free meals for the unemployed. The service was extended in 1934 to include the furnishing of good meals at a minimum price to workers who were employed.

Since the inauguration of the original low-cost restaurants, others have been opened which serve meals for those with somewhat higher income. The Government has tried through the restaurants to teach people better food habits. For instance, extra servings of lettuce, whole wheat bread and butter were available without charge; menus were planned to give a balanced diet; posters in the restaurants offered advice as to eating habits.

Over 1½ million meals were served in Montevideo and over 2 million more throughout the country in the period May 1937 to May 1938. The Government has also established school lunchrooms, and in 1940 there were 652 such lunchrooms with an enrollment of approximately 39 thousand children.

Education

Uruguay has an unusual public education system which it owes, like most of its social legislation, to hard working, social-minded President Batlle Ordoñez, who entered his first term of office in 1903. President Batlle believed in universal free education for rich and poor, for men and women, for rural and urban populations, from the kindergarten through the university. That is what Uruguay has today and is improving--free education for all young people, night schools for adults, technical schools for youth and adults. In 1942 a Workers' University was created to offer cultural and technical courses to persons engaged in industry, this in addition to the night classes, and a regular vocational course. From kindergarten to university, day and night classes of the schools are overflowing with students.

Tuition is free, books can be borrowed, all laboratory and other fees are paid by the State.

Since both men and women must vote when they are 18, university students take an active and forceful part in politics. On many issues they have held the balance of power. The university students have been in the vanguard of Uruguay's strong opposition to Nazism and Fascism.

As another part of the public educational program the Department of Physical Education has a system of playgrounds for children, swimming pools, gymnasiums, and sports for adults. One of these which I visited was a gymnasium class of several hundred young women employed in offices and stores.

Women and Social Problems

The universal free education system of Uruguay and the general acceptance of the idea of adult education undoubtedly have done much to raise the position of women in the social, economic and political life of the nation. Much credit is also due to the individual efforts of outstanding women; one example is a woman physician who since the early 1900's has worked to improve the position of women and the health of the people. Uruguayan women have represented their country at international conferences, where they have been particularly active in committees considering social problems. The first woman physician of Uruguay was permanent member of several commissions of the League of Nations dealing with the welfare of women and children.

In the universities, women students participate fully in the professional and political organizations of student life. Young women students have shared with the men the work and the risks of student campaigns on national issues, such as the student strike and demonstrations in 1941 against Nazi-Fascist infiltration in the university, the national legislature and the press.

Attendance of working women at the night schools is surprisingly high in Montevideo. In 1941 one vocational school had over 300 employed women of all ages in night classes, and about 800 women were enrolled in another public night school. At the same time there were many women in factories, industrial homework and domestic service who were scarcely literate.

The professions claim a number of women who have achieved enviable positions: medicine, law, chemistry, pharmacy, teaching, architecture. They have used their special professional skills to improve social conditions: to extend education, to modernize the treatment of juvenile delinquents, to improve the housing, working conditions and the food habits of the working classes. They have been willing to introduce important new ideas, as, for example, a young woman trained in physical education and physiotherapy who recently established the first physiotherapy clinic in Montevideo which has had remarkable success.

Suffrage was granted to women in 1932 and, as already noted, voting is compulsory for both women and men from the age of eighteen. Women are active in the political parties and in supporting social legislation. They are eligible for all public offices but as yet hold few elective offices in comparison to their voting strength.

Over a number of years there have been various women's organizations that were formed to meet particular needs or to advocate special reforms. Soon after the European war began the "Voluntarias Democratas" (Volunteers for Democracy) was established. Within a year it was the largest women's organization in Uruguay. Its purpose was to work against Nazi-Fascist threats on the home front, to help with civilian defense, and to send relief aid to civilians of the Allied Nations. Homemakers, students, professional and other employed women from all parts of the Republic were members. In addition to first aid classes, knitting, and sewing groups, the organization carried on an intensive pro-democracy educational campaign. More recently, a new organization Acci6n Femenina por la Victoria (Women's Action Committee for Victory) has largely supplanted the Volunteers for Democracy, with a similar program on an even more ambitious scale.

A radio broadcasting station directed by women and with programs largely intended for women listeners has conducted an effective educational program. The list of women's organizations that appeared on this station during one year is indicative of the part women have played through their organizations in alleviating social problems. Included in the list are: the Uruguayan Association for the Protection of Children, the Uruguayan Association for the Education of Mothers, the National Committee Against Illiteracy, Catholic Action, Committee for Fresh Air Schools, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Social Service School of Uruguay, the Women's University, the Committee for the Poor, the National School of Women's Industries, School of Nurses, various Trade Unions, the Uruguayan Red Cross, the Auxiliary Committee for School Lunch-rooms, the Hospital for Employed Women.

One of many projects serves as an example of the social work carried on by women. The Hospital for Employed Women was established in 1921 after a gift of money made possible the purchase of the building and installations. The hospital facilities include a medical clinic, dental clinic, a small laboratory, a well-equipped operating room and 60 beds for interned patients. Women make up the Board of Directors, and they raise money to supplement the income from dues and fees for the maintenance of the hospital, assist in sewing and mending, as well as perform their administrative duties as board members. Between five and six thousand employed women are dues-paying members, a large percentage of whom are domestic employees. For a small annual payment, the members receive all services free of charge with the exception of maternity cases, for which there is a special fee. In one month, 1,076 cases were treated at the medical clinic and 745 at the dental clinic, 50 patients were hospitalized, and there were 24 operations. A course for volunteer first-aid nurses is given, some of whom serve in the hospital after completing the course.

The fresh air home for undernourished children, the Council for Children's Welfare, and similar institutions have long been administered efficiently by women.

Social and Labor Legislation

Uruguay has an enviable reputation of being not only a strong democracy, but a country with advanced social and labor legislation. At the present time it may not have much more social legislation than some other countries, but Uruguay got an earlier start and her people are now receiving the benefits. The small size and unity of the country has stimulated social experimentation in advance of that possible in larger and more complex nations.

In 1915 an 8-hour workday was established by law for workers and salaried employees in industry, commerce, and transportation.

As early as 1919 the old-age pensions act was passed.

In 1920 came compulsory weekly day of rest for all; in 1923 minimum wage for agricultural and other workers. In 1931, a 44-hour week for all those employed in commerce. In 1933, manual workers and salaried employees in commerce were given 14 days paid vacation.

The social security system includes workmen's compensation, care for mothers and children, social insurance against accidents, sickness, disability, and unemployment, and the rights of a deceased worker's family to corresponding pensions; free old-age pensions to all persons without resources or disabled. All but agricultural workers are included in the retirement system but these do have the old-age pension system already mentioned.

Special legislation applying to women follows the pattern familiar to South America. Factories are required to provide nurseries where mothers may leave their babies until they are a year old, and to give maternity leave with pay. Night work, and work that is dangerous or unhealthy are prohibited by law; and seats are required for women where the nature of the work permits.

Uruguay is justly proud of its labor legislation for in the early years it was not easily attained. The 8-hour law was introduced in 1906 and after nine years was finally passed over the employers' vehement protests and dire predictions of chaos. After it became law, it was effective chiefly where labor organizations were strong enough to enforce it. The minimum wage law for rural workers was argued for four years.

Labor Problems

Uruguayan workers have a good record of industrial productivity due to increasing education, a substantial diet, and rising health standards. Industry can still absorb more trained workers than are available.

Foreign trade, export and import, is the employment barometer for Uruguay and the bellwether of its standard of living. In the 1930's unemployment mounted as export markets for beef, hides, and wool shrank. The war in Europe and the shipping crisis early accentuated the dependence of Uruguayan industry for critical materials on the outside world. With a large proportion of the workers of Montevideo connected in one way or another with the construction trades, for example, curtailment of construction due to shortages of critical materials such as metals, which must be imported, had immediate economic repercussions throughout the country.

The extensive employment of women in industry has not meant, thus far, that they are adequately paid. There is the tendency to consider women's wages as "extras" rather than as "necessities," when in reality the great majority of employed women need the money to help support the family. In many cases women are the sole family support. Wages for men in the lower income brackets for the most part are not sufficient to support the families. Employers assume that one or more additional members will add his or her earnings to the family income.

In 1940 a congressional committee in Uruguay made an investigation of wages and living and working conditions of the workers in a number of industries. In its report appear frequently such phrases as the following: "Women doing skilled work earn less than the rest of the workers who are men. The general characteristic is that the woman worker receives low wages out of proportion to the grade of work she does. When the worker is a man, he is paid more." Again such differentials lower the general standard of living by reducing the consuming power of the families dependent on women's earnings.

Labor Movement

Trade unionism is not as strong in Uruguay as might be expected. A national organization of workers was reestablished in March 1942 after several months of preparation by an organizing committee, but according to reports, unions with large memberships are not affiliated. Unaffiliated unions can have influence in Uruguay because the country is small and compact. Unions that are strong in the capital, Montevideo, can also speak for workers outside the city. The trade unions have had marked influence on legislation.

Two explanations were given by Uruguayans for the lack of a stronger, more united labor movement. First, the early advanced social and labor legislation; and second, internal political strife which had split the unions and weakened them.

Summary

Uruguay represents another segment of the social and labor picture of South America:

An unspectacular but lovely plains country, with rich soil, temperate climate, and hydro-electric-power possibilities; lacking in mineral resources; no natural barriers hindering transportation and communication.

A country dominated in many ways by its one big city which is also the capital and principal port.

An underpopulated country needing and wanting sturdy European agricultural immigrants but lacking the means to provide land ownership incentives to newcomers.

Primarily an agricultural economy based on livestock and grain for export; other than food processing, ceramics, and woollen textiles, the increasing manufacturing industries depend heavily on imports for strategic raw materials; the expanding industries are all traditional woman-employing industries producing consumers' goods.

Western European influences have been strong in the economic, political, and cultural outlook of the country.

A democratic, cosmopolitan, experimental point of view has dominated for many years and is sharply reflected in the political, economic, and educational status of women.

A homogenous population with no sharp racial or cultural tensions; a large middle class minimizes the influence of either the very rich or the very poor.

A high literacy rate based on widespread free public education; a vigorous, energetic people capable of high industrial productivity.

Uruguay is a nation occupying the role of a social laboratory and its efforts and experience in attempting to adjust, largely within a democratic political framework, its social and economic machinery to keep pace with industrialization may eventually prove especially significant for other nations of the hemisphere.

CONCLUSIONS

This brief study of social and labor problems of Peru on the West Coast and Uruguay on the East Coast should make it clear that generalizations about South America will not stand up under scrutiny. Each country is different, more so than the distinctive geographic sections of the United States but without the unifying force of a Federal Government from coast to coast.

Peru and Uruguay do seem to typify, however, most of the major problems found in South America in varying degrees. The geography and mixture of the peoples, education and health, development of agriculture and industry, natural resources and dependence on foreign markets -- all these are interwoven with standard of living and consuming power. These countries have leaned heavily on the techniques of legislation and governmental action to raise living standards. They found it necessary to do for their wage earners many things which in the United States have first been established by workers themselves through collective action and later re-enforced by law or other governmental assistance.

Some Effects of the War

Uruguay, like other South American countries, has felt the effects of war severely and drastically in some respects. Gasoline has been one serious shortage, for Uruguay has no oil resources, and rationing became necessary early in 1941. There have been food and fuel shortages, and inflation--all directly affecting wage earners. Wages have not increased as rapidly as prices. Transportation and industry have suffered for lack of machine repairs and replacements; raw materials and other essentials could not be imported. Industrial plants were experiencing these shortages soon after the European war began.

Peru, except for having plenty of gasoline, has experienced the same wartime difficulties. The rural population, however, has not been affected as seriously because the demands of their limited diet are supplied from their crops. The manual workers and the middle class in the cities have suffered a terrific increase in the cost of living, shortages in food and other articles.

Peru's postwar economy rests heavily on United States policies in regard to buying the country's export products, supplying necessary machinery and raw material imports, and assisting the development of national industries.

A writer from Peru says that without the continued cooperation of the United States after the war Peru would be thrust back into her limited prewar economic activity. He emphasizes that this means that Peru would be standing still. He continues, "Peru does not hope that the United States will continue to buy cotton and sugar after the war, but that other products such as coffee, rotenone, quinine, minerals will be purchased."

War conditions in certain respects have accelerated and in other ways retarded the industrial development of the South American countries. National industries have probably made permanent gains to the extent that more consumers' goods which were formerly imported can now be produced locally in quantity and quality. Some new industries, vital to the war and useful in peacetime but expensive to establish and uneconomic to maintain in their infant stages, may survive as sound permanent additions to the national economies. The growth of intra-continental trade between neighboring and West Coast - East Coast nations rather than almost exclusive dependence on European and United States markets is a wartime change of long range importance.

Everyone recognizes that the end of the war will call for drastic readjustments. The big question posed by the other American Republics is, will there be time for gradual transition and controlled adjustments, or will contract cancellations drop with the suddenness of buzz bombs. South American countries are much more deeply involved in this war than in World War I. Their hopes for stability, industrial expansion, and improved standards of living depend on the outcome of the peace as well as the outcome of the war.