

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

2 February 1966

To all National Spiritual Assemblies Engaged in Mass Teaching Work

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Since writing to the National Spiritual Assemblies of the world regarding the importance of teaching the masses, we have received reports from all over the world indicating the steady increase in the number of believers, the concentration of the friends on the more receptive areas, however remote these may have been, and the opening up of new and challenging fields for expansion and service. In this letter we wish once again to stress the importance of this subject, share with you our thoughts regarding the supreme need to preserve the victories you have already won and the necessity to pursue the vital work in which you are engaged and to which the eyes of your sister communities in East and West are turned with admiration.

It has been due to the splendid victories in large-scale conversion that the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has entered a new phase in its development and establishment throughout the world. It is imperative, therefore, that the process of teaching the masses be not only maintained but accelerated. The teaching committee structure that each National Assembly may adopt to ensure best results in the extension of its teaching work is a matter left entirely to its discretion, but an efficient teaching structure there must be, so that the tasks are carried out with dispatch and in accordance with the administrative principles of our Faith. From among the believers native to each country, competent traveling teachers must be selected and teaching projects worked out. In the words of our beloved Guardian, commenting upon the teaching work in Latin America: "Strong and sustained support should be given to the vitally needed and highly meritorious activities started by the native ... traveling teachers, ... who, as the mighty task progresses, must increasingly bear the brunt of responsibility for the propagation of the Faith in their homelands."

While this vital teaching work is progressing each National Assembly must ever bear in mind that expansion and consolidation are inseparable processes that must go hand in hand. The interdependence of these processes is best elucidated in the following passage from the writings of the beloved Guardian: "Every outward thrust into new fields, every multiplication of Bahá'í institutions, must be paralleled by a deeper thrust of the roots which sustain the spiritual life of the community and ensure its sound development. From this vital, this ever-present need attention must, at no time, be diverted; nor must it be, under any circumstances, neglected, or subordinated to the no less vital and urgent task of ensuring the outer expansion of Bahá'í administrative institutions. That this community ... may maintain a proper balance between these two essential aspects of its development ... is the ardent hope of my heart." To ensure that the spiritual life of the individual believer is continuously enriched, that local communities are becoming increasingly conscious of their collective duties, and that the institutions of an evolving administration are operating efficiently, is, therefore, as important as expanding into new fields and bringing in the multitudes under the shadow of the Cause.

These objectives can only be attained when each National Spiritual Assembly makes proper arrangements for all the friends to be deepened in the knowledge of the Faith. The National Spiritual Assemblies in consultation with the Hands of the Cause, who are the Standard-Bearers of the Nine Year Plan, should avail themselves of the assistance of Auxiliary Board members, who, together with the traveling teachers selected by the Assembly or its Teaching Committees, should be continuously encouraged to conduct deepening courses at Teaching Institutes and to make regular visits to Local Spiritual Assemblies. The visitors, whether Board members or traveling teachers should meet on such occasions not only with the Local Assembly but, of course, with the

local community members, collectively at general meetings and even, if necessary, individually in their homes.

The subjects to be discussed at such meetings with the Local Assembly and the friends should include among others the following points:

1. the extent of the spread and stature of the Faith today;
2. the importance of the daily obligatory prayers (at least the short prayer);
3. the need to educate Bahá'í children in the Teachings of the Faith and encourage them to memorize some of the prayers;
4. the stimulation of youth to participate in community life by giving talks, etc. and having their own activities, if possible;
5. the necessity to abide by the laws of marriage, namely, the need to have a Bahá'í ceremony, to obtain the consent of parents, to observe monogamy; faithfulness after marriage; likewise the importance of abstinence from all intoxicating drinks and drugs;
6. the local Fund and the need for the friends to understand that the voluntary act of contributing to the Fund is both a privilege and a spiritual obligation. There should also be discussion of various methods that could be followed by the friends to facilitate their contributions and the ways open to the Local Assembly to utilize its local Fund to serve the interests of its community and the Cause;
7. the importance of the Nineteen Day Feast and the fact that it should be a joyful occasion and rallying point of the entire community;
8. the manner of election with as many workshops as required, including teaching of simple methods of balloting for illiterates, such as having one central home as the place for balloting and arranging for one literate person, if only a child, to be present at that home during the whole day, if necessary;
9. last but not least, the all-important teaching work, both in the locality and its neighboring centers, as well as the need to continuously deepen the friends in the essentials of the Faith. The friends should be made to realize that in teaching the Faith to others they should not only aim at assisting the seeking soul to join the Faith, but also at making him a teacher of the Faith and its active supporter.

All the above points should, of course, be stressed within the framework of the importance of the Local Spiritual Assembly, which should be encouraged to vigorously direct its attention to these vital functions and become the very heart of the community life of its own locality, even if its meetings should become burdened with the problems of the community. The local friends should understand the importance of the law of consultation and realize that it is to the Local Spiritual Assembly that they should turn, abide by its decisions, support its projects, cooperate wholeheartedly with it in its task to promote the interests of the Cause, and seek its advice and guidance in the solution of personal problems and the adjudication of disputes, should any arise amongst the members of the community.

As the Universal House of Justice intends to have on file a full record of the progress of the teaching work in large-scale conversion areas, we request you to send us any published material, such as forms, cards, pamphlets, pictures, audiovisual aids, deepening booklets, etc. that you are currently using, with adequate explanations by your Assembly as to how they are being used, and any comments you may wish to make about their usefulness. Your National Assembly should also feel free to share with us your problems and needs as well as any recommendations you may

have. We are looking forward to receiving a prompt reply to this letter, as we feel that an early evaluation of the methods used in various fields of teaching is vital and essential at this time.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]