

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

January 1977

To the Friends assembled at the International Teaching Conference in Auckland

Dearly loved Friends,

With hearts full of love and admiration for the followers of the Most Great Name in Australasia we send our warmest greetings to all assembled in this historic gathering in the heart of the Antipodes.

How great is your place in Bahá'í history! How bright are the prospects for the future of the Cause so lovingly nurtured for more than half a century by hundreds of stalwart steadfast believers, spiritual heirs of Hyde and Clara Dunn, who in direct response to the Tablets of the Divine Plan forsook their home and went to pioneer in Australia, and whose names, Shoghi Effendi wrote, were "graven in letters of gold" upon his heart. In March 1951, when in the entire Pacific area there was but one National Spiritual Assembly, the beloved Guardian predicted that "The prizes destined for the heroic warriors, battling for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the Southern Hemisphere, and particularly Australasia, are glorious beyond compare. The assistance to be vouchsafed to them from on high in their struggle for its establishment, its recognition and triumph is ready to be poured forth in astonishing abundance."

Now, twenty-five years later, the achievements are truly astounding. Beginning with the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand at Riḍván 1957, the number of National Assemblies has increased elevenfold; the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the Antipodes has been erected near Sydney; His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II of Western Samoa has become the first reigning monarch to embrace the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh; the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies now stands at over 360; and the number of localities where Bahá'ís reside in this vast oceanic area covering well-nigh one-eighth of the earth's surface is more than 1,800. These accomplishments doubtless have been a source of great joy to the immortal soul of Shoghi Effendi, whose esteem and affection for the followers of Bahá'u'lláh laboring for His Cause in the Antipodes was frequently expressed in glowing terms in his letters to the Assemblies and friends in Australasia.

Dear friends, we have now passed the midpoint of the Five Year Plan. You are met in the beautiful city of Auckland to take stock and to make plans for attaining the victories which will surely be yours.

The National Spiritual Assemblies of the New Hebrides and of the Marshall Islands are to be raised up next Riḍván; plans for the soon-to-be-erected Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Samoa are in process; but although the goal of establishing Bahá'í centers totaling 2,188 is within easy reach, the Local Assembly goals assigned to each national community, totaling 613, need prompt and decisive attention. The divine assistance spoken of by the beloved Guardian in 1951 has ever been available, and is still "ready to be poured forth in astonishing abundance." It is within your power during the coming year to win all assigned teaching goals, leaving the final year of the Plan for consolidation and the winning of supplementary victories.

This will be achieved, not by resting on laurels, but by manifesting those qualities of faith, judgment, vision, loyalty, courage and self-sacrifice which earned the Guardian's praise so frequently in past decades. Let the valiant Australasian Bahá'í communities vie once more with their sister communities throughout the world for the palm of victory and maintain their position in the vanguard of the Army of Light.

Pioneers, traveling teachers and a fresh outpouring of funds are essential ingredients to the onward march of the Cause throughout Australia, New Zealand and the islands of the South

Pacific. Let those who can offer their valued services to the teaching work arise without delay; let those who cannot travel or pioneer deputize those who can go in their stead.

We cherish the highest hopes for the success of your endeavors and it is our constant prayer that Bahá'u'lláh will shower His richest blessings and confirmations upon you.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]