THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

16 April 1981

To all Continental Pioneer Committees

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

As we enter the second phase of the Seven Year Plan, the Universal House of Justice has given consideration to the vital role that Continental Pioneer Committees can and should increasingly play in helping to fulfill the pioneer goals that have been set, and in coordinating international traveling teaching projects. We have been asked to send you the following comments.

There is no doubt that closer collaboration of the Continental Pioneer Committees with the Continental Boards of Counselors and with the National Spiritual Assemblies, both those supplying pioneers and travel teachers and those receiving them, will increase the number of pioneers effectively and expeditiously settled at their posts, and will improve the results of the labors of international traveling teachers. This collaboration should always be uppermost in the minds of each Continental Pioneer Committee, particularly its secretary, so that efforts are increasingly made to widen the scope of the relationships and to strengthen the ties which bind the Continental Pioneer Committees to the institutions which they are called upon to serve.

Pioneers

In the message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, intended to be read at the National Conventions, a call is raised for a total of 279 pioneers to settle in 80 countries. A list of these countries is attached, showing the number to be settled in each. The number of pioneers on this list is additional to those called for at the outset of the Plan. No assignment of specific quotas has been made to National Spiritual Assemblies, although it is generally expected that the National Spiritual Assemblies originally made responsible for sending pioneers to these countries will respond favorably to this new call and spontaneously feel the spiritual responsibility to fill the supplementary pioneer needs. It will be the duty of Pioneer Committees to keep a close tally of pioneers settling in the countries named by the House of Justice, and to ensure, to the extent possible, that no goals remain unfilled.

Traveling Teachers

Experience has shown that traveling teachers from abroad can be of tremendous assistance to the teaching work in the fields of proclamation, expansion, and consolidation. It is important that the best use possible be made of these friends who are sacrificing their time and resources to serve the Faith in foreign fields.

Care must also be taken that traveling teachers do not prove to be a burden on the receiving community, and a cause of problems. The two most frequently occurring problems caused by traveling teachers can, the House of Justice feels, be greatly reduced by prior advice and information provided by your Committees.

The first is the arrival in a country, in rapid succession, of foreign traveling teachers who do not speak the language. Sometimes the net result is that the time of all the best local teachers (who may well be better teachers than the visitor) is occupied by translating for the traveler, and the community, instead of being helped and stimulated by visitors, is exhausted and becomes reluctant to accept future help. This can be avoided by proper advance planning and by explaining to both the Spiritual Assemblies and to the traveling teachers themselves, that the Assemblies should not feel obliged to provide assistance for a visitor who arrives without prior agreement, and

that a teacher who arrives unannounced may well have to concentrate on doing his teaching work unaided and without burdening the local friends.

The second problem occurs most frequently in countries such as those in Africa, where there is entry by troops. In such countries it is comparatively easy to bring large numbers of new believers into the Faith, and this is such a thrilling experience that visiting teachers often tend to prefer to do this rather than help with the consolidation work. Yet it is in consolidation that traveling teachers from abroad can often be most useful to the community. The House of Justice believes that this problem can be eased by your Committees' impressing upon traveling teachers that they must adhere strictly to the guidance given to them by the teaching committees and Spiritual Assemblies on the spot, and subordinate their own wishes to the need to render their services in the fields where they are most urgently required. It should be pointed out that, especially if they are assigned to expansion work, they must remember that consolidation is an essential and inseparable element of teaching, and if they go to a remote area and enroll believers whom no one is going to be able to visit again in the near future, they may well be doing a disservice to those people and to the Faith. To give people this glorious Message and then leave them in the lurch, produces disappointment and disillusionment, so that, when it does become possible to carry out properly planned teaching in that area, the teachers may well find the people resistant to the Message. The first teacher who was careless of consolidation, instead of planting and nourishing the seeds of faith has, in fact, "inoculated" the people against the Divine Message and made subsequent teaching very much harder.

While the caveats given above should be carefully considered by the Continental Pioneer Committees, nothing should be done to dampen the zeal of the friends to arise in order to carry out the injunction of Bahá'u'lláh to move from place to place. Their desire to offer themselves as travel teachers should be encouraged by the Continental Pioneer Committees to the extent that this lies within their power, and when the friends have volunteered, they should be lovingly guided so that the maximum results are obtained from their visits.

International Conferences 1982

The Universal House of Justice has called International Conferences during the first nine months in 1982 in the following locations: Montreal, Canada; Quito, Ecuador; Dublin, Ireland; Lagos, Nigeria; and Manila, Philippines. As soon as specific dates have been set, you will be notified. It is anticipated that many friends attending these Conferences will be able to undertake travel teaching assignments in connection with their travel to and from Conferences.

The House of Justice has asked us to alert you to the opportunities, and to request you to devise ways and means of encouraging such offers and of taking advantage of them, preferably by advance planning and routing of volunteers in consultation with the National Spiritual Assemblies of the countries they will visit. You should plan to have a representative of your Committee at the Conference nearest you to assist in the processing of pioneer offers and also in the routing of late traveling teacher offers. If it is not possible for a member of your Committee to attend, you may delegate another believer to represent you who, in such case, must be thoroughly briefed by you.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

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