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National Caucus of Chicano Social Scientists

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APPENDIX II

NATIONAL CAUCUS OF CHICANO SOCIAL SCIENTISTS NEWSLETTER Vol. I, No. 1 (Summer 1973)

This is the first issue of the Newsletter of the National Caucus of Chicano Social Scientists. Its purpose is to serve as a communication mechanism among Chicano social scientists. This issue is devoted to reporting in summary form the proceedings of the first national conference of the Caucus held at New Mexico Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico, on May 18, 19, and 20, 1973.

BACKGROUND OF THE CAUCUS

It is estimated that there are approximately seventy (70) practicing Chicano social scientists in the United States, i.e. those with a Ph.D. in the various disciplines of the social sciences teaching at the college and university level and/or actively involved in research. Since 1969/70 a number of Chicano caucuses have been formed along disciplinary lines by Chicano scholars active in the various professional associations of the social sciences, e.g. the Chicano political science caucus, La Junta de Sociologos Chicanos, etc. The objectives of those caucuses have been largely limited to "bread and butter issues" of faculty recruitment and graduate student entrance into the various professions. In the final analysis their objectives have been to open the doors for Chicanos and to promote the welfare of both faculty and students.

At the annual meeting of the Southwestern Social Science Association held in San Antonio, Texas, in March, 1972, representatives of the various existing Chicano caucuses formed the National Caucus of Chicano Social Scientists. A Steering Committee for the Caucus was appointed comprised of representatives from the various existing Chicano disciplinary organizations for the purpose of planning the first national meeting of the Caucus. The Steering Committee was chaired by Jaime Sena

Rivera. It was decided in San Antonio that the purpose of the Las Vegas conference was to begin organizing a more formal organization to replace the ad hoc National Caucus.

THE LAS VEGAS CONFERENCE

The conference was attended by approximately fifty Chicano social scientists. Although the conference was national in scope, the majority of those attending were from Southwestern area colleges and universities. It was assumed that a truly national representation was not possible due to difficulties in securing travel funds. The various disciplines were fairly equitably represented. Most of the delegates were faculty and graduate students and several undergraduate students also participated. The thrust of the conference discussions focused on the nature and direction of Chicano social science, and the structure and purpose of the proposed Association. There were several key themes which had general consensus among the delegates. These themes reflected dissatisfaction with traditional social science and concern for the question of the role of the Chicano social scientist.

THEMES OF THE CONFERENCE: A NEW DIRECTION FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE

(1) Social science research by Chicanos must be much more problem-oriented than traditional social science has been. Chicano research should aim to delineate the social problems of La Raza and actively propose solutions. Analysis should not be abstracted or disembodied from such pressing social concerns. Social science scholarship cannot be justified for its own sake: it must be a committed scholarship that can contribute to Chicano liberation.

(2) Social science research projects should be interdisciplinary in nature. Only by pooling our intellectual resources can we deal with the whole range of factors that affect the social situation of Chicanos. The traditional disciplinary orientation (economics, sociology, psychology, etc.) has served to fragment our research in a highly artificial manner, and obscures the interconnections among variables that operate to maintain the oppression of our people.

(3) Social science as practiced by Chicanos should break down the existing barriers between research and action. Research and action should exist in a dialectical relationship, i.e. research generates information that can lead to more effective problem-solving action; action in turn produces information that modifies and advances theoretical understanding. In order to bridge the gap between theory and action, Chicano social scientists must develop close ties with community action groups.

(4) Chicano social science must be highly critical, in the double sense of rigorous analysis and a trenchant critique of American institutions. The working of these institutions have perpetuated the unfavorable condition of the Chicano. Liberation from these conditions will require a radical transformation of existing institutions, and it should be a primary task of our scholarship to prepare the ground for such transformation.

(5) Chicanos must be careful not to unduly limit the scope of our investigations. We must study the Chicano community but within the context of those dominant institutional relationships that affect Chicanos. Our levels of investigation must include the local, the regional, and the national, as well as the international dimension which currently plays such an important role in American society. One pressing item requiring intensive research has to do with the relationship between class, race, and culture in determining the Chicano's historical experience.

THE PURPOSES OF A CHICANO SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Participants at the conference mentioned a wide variety of purposes which could be served by a Chicano Social Science Association. Among these are:

1. Establishing communication among Chicano scholars across geographical and disciplinary boundaries.
2. Encouraging the development of new social theories and models, in keeping with the direction outlined above.
3. Facilitating the recruitment of Chicanos into all levels of social science institutions.
4. Acting to increase the flow of funds to research undertaken by Chicanos, particularly as that research contributes to the goals and direction of the Association.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE PROPOSED ASSOCIATION

Some of the liveliest discussion at the meeting concerned the structure of the Association. During these discussions a decision emerged to break with the traditional form of organization of professional associations and to attempt an innovative structure more in keeping with the philosophy and direction of a new social science as laid out at the Las Vegas conference.

In keeping with the interdisciplinary orientation, it was decided to abandon the idea of membership via disciplinary organizations (the various caucuses, etc.). Rather, membership in the national organization will be based on participation in interdisciplinary local or sub-regional collective research

units. In keeping with their action orientation, these units will be referred to as focos.

The focos are envisioned as small enough to allow regular interaction among its members, since such interaction is seen as essential in maintaining a high level of interest and participation. A high level of participation, in turn, is necessary if such organizations are to develop and implement vigorous projects combining action and research at the local level.

The foco is thus seen as the real driving force of the association, and the center of activity for its members. The foco is to be the source of initiative and the locus of power. The local research/action projects developed by the focos should correspond to local conditions and to the interests of its members, integrating existing research wherever possible. Hopefully there will be a great diversity among the projects undertaken, with the various focos learning from the experiences and activities of others. Eventually there should develop direct working relationships among adjoining focos, based on overlapping interests.

The internal structure of the foco is left for each foco to determine, in keeping with the general tone and direction of the Association. It may be that within each foco there will be a number of sub-groups or task forces organized around common interests.

At the national level, there is to be a coordinating committee composed of delegates from the focos. The purpose of this group is to act as an information link among the focos, as by seeing to the publication of a regular newsletter; to make arrangements for national conferences; and to act as a general coordinating body. It is not seen as a locus of power or major initiative in the association, but as a channel for the energies of the focos.

An annual national conference will be part of the association. Presentations at this annual meeting are to be initiated by the various focos, and will reflect the activities and research of their members.

CONCLUSION

The Las Vegas Conference concluded with the election of a Provisional Coordinating Committee which replaces the Caucus Steering Committee. Those elected were as follows: Tomas Almaguer--UC Berkeley, Mario Barrera--UC San Diego, Ray Burrola--Colorado State University, Rodolfo de la Garza--UT at El Paso, Guillermo Lux--New Mexico Highlands University, Geralda Vialpando--UC San Diego, Carlos Munoz--UC Irvine, Teresa Aragon de Shepro--University of Washington. This committee has been charged with the task of coordinating the activities of the proposed National Association and the arrangement of its next national meeting. It was also agreed that a Newsletter would be developed and circulated nationally by the committee. A

number of initial focos were designated at the conference. Any interested person should call or write the "contact persons" closest to his/her foco area. The contact persons were delegated the responsibility of recruitment of students, faculty, and interested community persons into their respective focos. Additional focos should be organized whenever feasible. This is perhaps the most crucial task that must be performed for unless local focos are operative the Association will have difficulty getting off the ground. The contact persons are as follows:

Las Vegas-Northern New Mexico
Guillermo Lux
Department of History
Highlands University
Las Vegas, New Mexico 87701

Northern Colorado
Ray Burrola
Director, Chicano Studies
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado

Southern California
Jose Cuellar
Andrus Gerontology Center
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

Mario Barrera
Department of Political Science
University of California
La Jolla, California 92037

Carlos Munoz
Program in Comparative Culture
University of California
Irvine, California 92664

Northern California
Tomas Almaguer
Department of Sociology
University of California
Berkeley, California

Arturo Pacheco
School of Education
Stanford University
Stanford, California 94305

Texas (El Paso Area)
 Rodolfo de la Garza
 Department of Political Science
 University of Texas
 El Paso, Texas 79968

Pacific Northwest Area
 Teresa de Shepro
 Department of Political Science
 University of Washington
 Seattle, Washington

TOWARD A CHICANO SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION:
 PROBLEMS & PROSPECTS

Prior to the formal establishment of the Association there are some basic questions that need to be clarified which revolve around the definition of role and the scope and objectives of the proposed organization. Only if concerned Chicano social scientists commit themselves to organization from the bottom (foco level) up can we hope to create a viable Association. It was agreed that only through the process of foco organization can those central and basic questions be clarified and a strong foundation laid for the proposed Association.

It must be noted that "established" Chicano social scientists were conspicuous by their absence at the conference. With the exception of two persons (both on the faculty of the host institution) there were no tenured or senior faculty in attendance. The apparent lack of interest on the part of "established" scholars presents a problem to the organization of a proposed Association. Without their participation it will be difficult to generate support at various levels important to the funding and establishment of a viable Association. We can only conjecture as to their reasons for not participating in the Las Vegas conference. Perhaps they are so well established in existing traditional professional associations that they perceive a Chicano Association as irrelevant to their careers. Whatever the reasons for their absence the Caucus should encourage and welcome their participation in the future.

CONCLUDING NOTE

Items for publication in the Newsletter should be addressed to Carlos Munoz, Program in Comparative Culture, University of California, Irvine, California 92664. Everyone is urged to respond to this issue of the Newsletter and to submit their ideas regarding the proposed Association and most importantly on the agenda for the next national meeting. Everyone is urged to communicate with Chicano social scientists throughout the country, obtain names, and addresses so that they may receive

our communication. Most importantly, we should encourage them to organize a foco wherever they exist in sufficient numbers to make it operative. The Newsletter will be published whenever sufficient items are received to warrant publication. UC Irvine can serve as a central contact point for the Newsletter, but responsibility for succeeding issues should circulate among various focos. If you have urgent questions or wish to disseminate info that cannot wait until publication of the Newsletter, please feel free to communicate with any member of the Coordinating Committee.

This issue of the Newsletter was put together by the following members of the National Coordinating Committee: Mario Barrera, Geralda Vialpando, Carlos Munoz.

We extend un fuerte abrazo a nuestros compañeros y compañeras que participaron y especialmente a los que hicieron posible la conferencia.

The warm hospitality extended to us in New Mexico made the conferencia meaningful not only intellectually but more importantly because we had the opportunity for old compañeros to see each other again.

The next Newsletter will announce the place and time of the first coordinating meeting as well as the recommended dates and place for the next annual meeting of the Association.