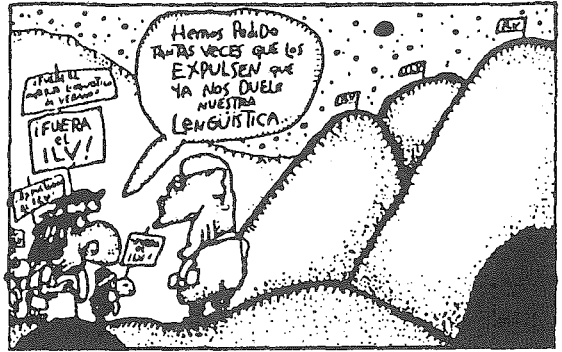


# SIL Serves Government Interests In Brazil

The Summer Institute of Linguistics has operated in Brazil since 1959. The following statement on their activities was presented by the Union of Indian Nations (UNI) to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1985.

"From the point of view of the government, they had everything to offer: personnel skilled in technology and methodology, experience working in similar situations in 21 countries, and the fact that they provide their work for free. And SIL textbooks served the development policies of the government, like trying to convince Indians that a road cut through our land would benefit us.

"In order to change the influence of SIL, bold moves are needed. Indian education should not be limited to the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic. We must also redeem the past, not only to retain certain myths and narratives, but also to ensure the perpetuation of our body of scientific knowledge, of our knowledge of the world, of our own ways of accounting and measuring, and of our relationship with nature. Education should offer more than just an understanding of the world of whites. We need to move around and defend ourselves within it."



"Those Summer Institute of Linguistics people are really a pain in the mouth."

## Many Sects Seek Indian Converts In Ecuador

Juan Aulestia, Oxfam America associate program representative for South America, made the following comments in an interview with SAIC.

"The government is focusing on how to disarticulate the Indian organizations. They have been utilizing many strategies. One is allowing an open-door policy to religious sects. The fundamentalists, such as the Jehovah Witnesses and the Pentecostals, have been able to penetrate to every corner of the country, which is steadily dividing Indian organizations and communities. In Ecuador there are about 300 different religious sects, most of them from the United States, as well

"We are not against a belief in God. We are very religious, very religious. We believe that people are the same as the plants, as all of the natural world. All have life and are brothers."

—Floriberto Diaz Gomez (Mixe) of Oaxaca, Mexico

"Most primitive tribal people are steeped in cultural practices initiated and motivated by superstition and fear. Religion . . . is generally a spiritist form of worship which is energized by satanic forces."

—New Tribes Mission

as the Unification Church [Moonies], which has over 150,000 followers.

"The people who belong to these churches no longer relate to the rest of the community people. They do not participate in traditional events and will not participate in community organizations. The social base is being divided.

"Under President Roldos, the Summer Institute of Linguistics was expelled from Ecuador, but the current government has been doing everything possible to bring them back. These sects do much work on the government's agenda in terms of providing basic education and controlling the level of Indian community unity and organizing.

"There have been three pillars of colonial rule: the state, the military, and the Catholic church. The Catholic church has maintained that position, a power position. There has been a spiritual gap and a lack of direct attention. So in some instances, the evangelical churches have responded to some of the direct needs of Indian communities."

## SIL Divides Indian Communities In Mexico

*Floriberto Diaz Gomez of the Assembly of Mixe Authorities in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, recently described to SAIIC the activities of SIL in his community.*

"The Summer Institute of Linguistics came into the Mixe region in 1936 during the Cárdenas era. They came first to work as linguists. When we were little kids, we were very frightened of the gringos because our parents told us that they ate people. Our families tried to protect us any way they could. The Institute introduced a different religion and their consciousness began to intrude into the communities. They sent Mixe to study at Mitla, which was their training center. After a while it was even Mixe who were pushing their religious belief while doing linguistic work.

"They have made bible translations, but they haven't made their linguistic work useful to the people. Even though they have been working here since the 30's, Mixe people still don't read and write in Mixe. If they really had an interest in teaching us to read and write our language, there would have been two or three generations reading and writing by now.

"We consider that religion is something

*Attempts by outsiders to impose religious beliefs on Indians has a long history, as shown in this Indian painting from the first years after the Spanish conquest of Mexico. A Spaniard with a sword fights one Indian while a priest baptizes a child.*

