

ECUADOR CONFENIAE Denounces Land Seizures By Oil Companies

The Confederation of Indian Nations in the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) has accused Occidental, Esso-Hispanoil, and Diamond Oil Companies from the United States, British Petroleum from England, and the Conoco-Opic consortium from the United States and Taiwan of moving into Indian lands with the approval of the Ecuadorian government. They have now become the largest threat to Indian communities.

Esso-Hispanoil, one of the largest oil companies in the world, obtained 100,000 hectares of land which belongs to the Huarani (Aucas). British Petroleum also obtained 200,000 hectares of Quichua land. According to CONFENIAE, both companies have been granted the use of land which is now being planted in African palm (see SAIIC Newsletter, Spring 1986). They say, "We have been able to prove that all these transnational corporations work cooperatively. The oil companies make the roads which are then used by those who exploit the African palm, cut down the forests and make this wood available to the large lumber companies."



Shuar Indian of Ecuador.

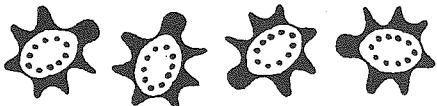
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"The History Of My Organization"

The following comments are part of an essay which won first prize in 1985 in a nationwide competition among Indian organizations in Ecuador. They originally appeared in La Bocina, the publication of the Ecuadorian Federation for Public Progress (Federación Ecuatoriana de Populorum Progressio).

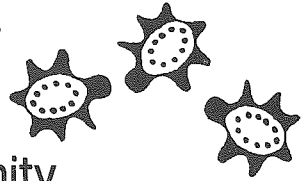
Our unity taught us what our goals must be. Our organization is not only for building community centers, bridges, schools, warehouses, water systems, and cooperatives, but also to develop a vision of our future. Clearly one of our goals is to develop the material infrastructure of our community, because we have to improve our lives. But as an organization we must be leery of developmentalism. We can't concern ourselves solely with material work, because then we run the risk of exploiting others in the same situation we were before.

At first we didn't understand this well and thought that by organizing ourselves we could do to other cultures what they have done to us. We lacked analysis and reflection. We always have to look to the future to see where our organization is going, to keep an eye on our goals, to avoid falling into the trap of developmentalism. Developmentalism brings along with it egoism, individualism, and materialism. It



brings poverty to the majority and takes from us our feeling for life, which is the most important thing there is.

Organizations are not made for us. They must be created. Begin with your home. At home we have trust. Trust is the seed.



Educational Efforts In Otavalo Community

Mariana Chuquin, a Quichua Indian from Otavalo, Ecuador, who is visiting in San Francisco, recently made the following comments on education in her community:

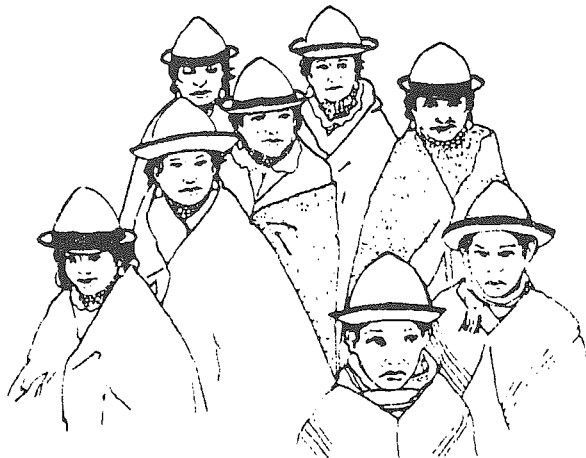
For those of us living in rural communities, it's very hard to educate our children. It is important to us that there is good bi-lingual education that strengthens our culture and communities. But many children are needed in the family's effort to survive economically, so they can't attend school. And the government gives very little support to education in rural communities. Most children don't go beyond the fourth grade.

In my community, Mariano Acosta, it is the community itself and the school teacher who work together to make an education possible for our children. The community organizes *mingas* (community work groups) to construct roads, the school building, and other community buildings. Sometimes we have to use our imagination to make educational equipment and materials. Every week we organize in *mingas* to improve our community, to continue forward each day for the future of our children.

Indian Voters Major Factor In Elections

The greatly increased political organization of Indian communities was cited as a major factor in the overwhelming rejection June 1 of a constitutional referendum proposed by Ecuador's conservative government, according to Juan Aulestia, Oxfam America program representative for South America.

Speaking at a meeting jointly sponsored by SAIIC and Oxfam America in Berkeley on June 19, Juan said that the growing realization among Indian communities that they can be a majority of the electorate was one of the most impressive developments he observed during a recent trip to Ecuador, which is his native country.



Juan said that the conservative government of President León Febres Cordero has moved to undermine Indian political organizations by renewing government support for the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an evangelical organization ordered to leave Ecuador by a previous government under pressure from Indian groups. The government has also created "ghost" organizations which it claims represent Indian interests as a means of spreading disunity in Indian communities.