THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR WORK

Through our activities and written materials we try to promote an understanding of the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean not as an expression of East-West conflict or as a political abstraction, but as the living reality for millions of people. We are concerned that the U.S. role in shaping that reality is something too few North Americans recognize and take responsibility for. U.S. military and economic intervention in Latin America has resulted in economies which dedicate most of their resources to the growing of cash crops to the exclusion of food production; regimes that have made death squads, torture and disappearances a fact of life; societies in which diarrhea is the number one cause of death and health care is a privilege; where democracy and elections are devoid of meaning since most people cannot read and write and are brutalized by daily work. We hope that from an increased awareness of why the expressions of struggle and resistance in Latin America are growing, active support for the people's efforts to construct a new life will develop.

But many of us who do this work have motivations in addition to sharing with the people of Latin America their aspirations for self-determination. We also aspire to the growth of a truly democratic society here in the United States. When the government claims that U.S. interests are at stake in Central America, exactly whose interests are being defended? Who really makes the decision to use American tax dollars for military aid in Latin American countries? We feel that U.S. foreign policy should be formulated openly, with the informed consent of the people. A policy which is made in secret and "sold" to the people by playing on unsubstantiated fears is a threat to democracy in this country.

As the Reagan Administration moves closer to a major confrontation in Central America; as the war against Nicaragua escalates; and as the prevalent socio-economic system in Latin America experiences one of its worst crises, we do our work with an increased sense of urgency. If our belief in democracy is to be more than an interest in formalities, we must become actively involved in working for democracy here and abroad.

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