



## CHAPTER FIVE

# REPORTS AND CONFERENCE TALK

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Stephen L and Irene Richards journeyed on the SS *Argentina* back to New York, arriving in early April 1948. They stayed in New York for a week and then headed back to Salt Lake City. They barely missed the April general conference. Elder Richards worked for the next couple weeks finalizing his report to the First Presidency. In the October 1948 general conference he described the lessons learned on his special mission to South America.

### THE DOCUMENTS

This chapter features an article from the *Church News* that contains a report of the tour with a direct interview with Elder Richards. Additionally, the observations and recommendations of Elder Richards are documented in his report to the First Presidency and his October 1948 general conference talk.

Saturday, April 17, 1948

NEWS ARTICLE: *CHURCH NEWS*<sup>1</sup>

**Missionary Work in South America Makes Definite Gain**

Missionary work in the Argentine, Uruguay, and Brazil Missions is beginning to take definite steps forward now missionaries have returned since the end of the war, Elder Stephen L Richards of the Council of the Twelve noted upon his return to Salt Lake City early this week.

With Mrs. Richards, the Church leader spent three months touring the three South American missions. Elder Richards is the first General Authority to visit South American missions since they were opened and dedicated by Elder Melvin J. Ballard in 1925.

Prior to the war nearly all of the branches were presided over and conducted by missionaries, Elder Richards said.

“During the war, while there were no missionaries laboring in their countries, the local Saints carried on the activities of the Church. These Saints continued to be a devoted and faithful people, but because of their lack of experience in being administrative officers there was little growth in

the size of the branches, and hardly no missionary work was accomplished.

“In our tour the South American Saints were most cordial to us in their reception,” he said. “It was a delight to meet and travel among them.”

Elder Richards visited and heard the reports of the nearly two hundred missionaries laboring in the three countries. With only two minor exceptions, he found them to be in excellent health. “These missionaries are faithful and devoted ambassadors; they are a credit to the Church, their parents, and themselves,” he noted. “Some of the elders experi-



*Elder and Sister Richards and friends.  
Courtesy of CHL.*

ence difficulty in adjusting themselves to their living conditions and food. Most of them maintain their own apartments and prepare their own food, which helps to make their adjustment easier.”

Perhaps the most appealing element of the gospel to the people of South America is the altruistic motives of the missionaries, who give their time without recompense and who sustain their own expenses. “This is so contrary to what the South Americans are accustomed to,” Elder Richards said, “that they never stop marveling at our missionaries’ unselfish devotion to the interest of others.”

Generally the press was friendly and expressed good will toward the Church, the missionaries, and the tour of Elder Richards and his party. “Occasionally, however, we were grossly misrepresented,” he said. “One paper printed, among other untruths, that I had fifteen wives.

“Missionary work is difficult to pursue. To reach the landed wealthy class is no small problem. Working among the lower classes presents many problems of proportions too; one among these many problems is the illiteracy of the masses, millions of whom are not even aware that there is such a book as the Bible. We noted that the concepts of liberty and democracy, as we understand them, are not generally understood. Only education of the masses can remove these many serious problems.

“There is great contrast in South America. The countries suffer greatly because of a complete lack of middle class; there just isn’t any. The population is divided into two groups, the landed aristocracy who are fabulously wealthy, and the great masses of poor workers who are almost destitute. There appears little hope of improving the condition of the present generation of the great masses. Right now the poor worker is even worse off than usual for he is caught in a maelstrom of heavy inflation.



*The Richardses at the park with President W. Ernest Young. Courtesy of CHL.*



*The Richardses and Youngs with missionaries. Courtesy of CHL.*

“The great hope of these nations is in its youth, who are determined to better their conditions, both economically and socially; they seek education and learning. Everywhere we visited, we found them anxious and desirous of learning the English language and customs.

“The peoples of Brazil and Uruguay are generally friendly to the United States,” Elder Richards said. “But it is common knowledge that the Argentines look with suspicion toward the United States feeling perhaps that we want to provide the leadership for South America, a position they covet.

“One of the great drawbacks to the development of their countries is their completely inadequate transportation systems. It is almost impossible to get from one place to another. Gasoline is rationed; automobiles

are limited, and what few roads there are, are impassable except in jeeps. To meet with one branch, it was necessary for us to travel 50 miles in a jeep—but never again.

“In every city it is a common sight to see a queue of people more than a block long on many street corners trying to board a worn-out and dilapidated bus or street car. In Brazil practically the only means of transportation is by airplane.

“We missed almost completely a winter, the seasons being reversed in the southern hemisphere. Everywhere we went we were told that they were having an unusually mild and cool summer. But in Brazil the heat to us was most suffocating and unbearable—along with the 100 per cent humidity,” Elder Richards said.

Elder and Mrs. Richards enjoyed unusually good health on their journey and reported the two ocean voyages were particularly restful.

**Monday, May 10, 1948**

## **STEPHEN L RICHARDS FINAL REPORT<sup>2</sup>**

May 10, 1948

The First Presidency Building

Dear Brethren:

I respectfully submit the following recommendations after my visit to the South American missions.

### **I. ALL SOUTH AMERICAN MISSIONS**

1. That the numbers of missionaries be maintained at about their present levels, at least for a sufficient length of time to enable us to appraise the results of the work.
2. That a more careful screening of missionaries sent to these missions be brought about, especially with reference to health, maturity, capacity to acquire the languages, industry, assured moral character and firm testimonies of the Gospel. It might be

well to have extra physical examinations and specially assigned interviewers for these missionaries.

3. That no large groups of missionaries be sent to any mission at any time.
4. That careful study and investigation be made in an attempt to get permanent visas for missionaries during the terms of their missions to avoid the great amount of time and large expense incurred at present by missionaries and mission presidents in their effort to secure renewals of visas.
5. That in connection with the foregoing we undertake to secure contact men to make application to consulates for visas.
6. That an effort be made to secure less expensive transportation for missionaries to and from South American mission fields.
7. That missionaries on their long voyages be specially admonished with reference to their conduct and the profitable employment of their time.
8. That careful study be given by the General Authorities to the foreign-language preparation of these missionaries. I discovered that a very considerable portion of the time and efforts of senior missionary companions and the missionary himself was given to the acquisition of the language, thus greatly limiting the productive work of each.
9. Parents and friends of the missionaries should be discouraged from sending packages to missionaries at Christmas or any other time. A large amount of missionary time is given to getting such packages out of customs and the contents are often, substantially worthless when the packages are finally secured.
10. Some means should be adopted to curtail the time and expense wasted by the missionaries on photographic materials and picture taking.
11. Attention should be given to the matter of clothes, books, blankets and other accessories taken by these missionaries to their fields of labor. It is generally better to equip for the mission before leaving home because the buying of clothes is difficult in the South American countries, most of the men's suits being tailored. At present they are more expensive than in the United

States. Instructions regarding dignity in appearance and conduct of missionaries should be re-emphasized. The practice of taking blankets and sheets to South America is open to question but at the present time there is some justification for it on account of the excessive cost of these articles in the foreign countries. As a normal practice, however, I recommend that the Church completely furnish at admission [mission] expense, the locals in which the missionaries live and that the missionaries' contributions to the rental of these locals be standardized as nearly as possible and generally increased. I found the contributions to these rentals to vary from \$3.50 per month to \$7.50 per month per missionary.

It has been the practice for the missionary to furnish his own blankets and sheets and sometimes other items of furnishings. When the missionary leaves he usually sells the articles to missionaries succeeding him. This practice has brought about some irritation and in a few instances bad feelings which have been positively harmful.

12. Remittances of money should be made in the methods which will bring the greatest realization in local currency to the missions and the missionaries. I satisfied myself that there is no justifiable criticism against using the public exchanges which are numerous and which I understand are licensed by the governments themselves. Certified checks, travelers checks and express money orders should be used wherever necessary to avoid the excessive charges of banks for the exchange service.

## II. ARGENTINE MISSION

1. With the concurrence of the mission presidency and President Williams<sup>3</sup> of Uruguay whom I invited to participate in the discussion I recommend that a mission home be purchased in the Belgrano district of Buenos Aires to conserve the time of the mission office force, to be near the American schools and to give more dignity to our work in the hope of reaching some of the more educated people.

2. To encourage particularly the young people of the Church and their friends, I recommend that the mission presidency be authorized to submit for purchase in Buenos Aires in a respectable section of the city, a site for a recreation hall and a possible future chapel. The recreation hall would serve to accommodate all of the larger meetings of the mission and should greatly increase the capacity of the mission to interest and convert the youth. An outdoor recreational lot is at present owned by the Church. It is said that it can be sold at a profit and the proceeds could be applied to a new and better recreational establishment.
3. Two other properties are owned by the Church,—a meeting house in Liniers section of Buenos Aires and a small local Church in Pergamino. I do not recommend the acquisition of additional properties at this time when values are so inflated, with perhaps two exceptions. If any small church should come on the market such as we acquired in Pergamino, it could be considered and in LaPlata which is one of the thriving branches of the mission where the saints are taking steps to secure a lot it might be feasible to undertake some modest construction there.
4. For the elevation of the missionary work in Argentina, one of the most necessary things is the renting of better locals in better sections of the cities. This is a very difficult undertaking with an acute shortage of housing but I recommend that the mission president be encouraged to secure better housing even at considerably higher rental expense. Many of the present locals are positively discouraging to the missionaries in their endeavors to get respectable people interested.
5. I recommend that study be given to the continuation of mission-wide conferences of missionaries and saints at Buenos Aires as at present conducted in April and October of each year.
6. Additional Church literature is much needed. I recommend that Brother Balderas<sup>4</sup> be given additional help to produce more Spanish translations and for the revision of some Spanish literature now in use.
7. Film strips, transcription records and additional missionary facilities are in great demand. Some of the people approached



cannot read. Pictures and transcribed music can be used to great advantage. Productions in Spanish would be most acceptable. They would, of course, serve all Spanish-speaking missions. I recommend study and early action.

8. This mission for a long time has maintained basketball teams made up of missionaries for the advertisement of the Church and in making contacts particularly among the young. Some good results are reported, but missionaries who play on the team and give concerts have little or no time for regular proselyting work. Perhaps much depends on the way the mission president handles the situation and his ability to capitalize on these public appearances and the contacts made. I think we should call for frequent reports on such activities and try to appraise the results.
9. I was furnished by Brother L. Pierce Brady<sup>5</sup> a treatise on maté,<sup>6</sup> the drinking of which is more or less a national custom. Brother Brady is also sending to me some samples which, when they arrive can be chemically analyzed. I am informed that the drink is passed around and imbibed through a tube, a most unsanitary practice. I think there is not sufficient evidence available to warrant the conclusion that the drinking of maté is an infraction of the Word of Wisdom, but I think that President Young has done well to ask the missionaries not to partake of it. An effort is being made in the country to establish the drink as a competitor to coffee. When I get returns on the chemical analysis, I will report.
10. I made rather definite recommendations to the presidency of this mission with reference to the organization of the presidency largely in accordance with the terms of the circular letter sent out by the First Presidency with the objective of making self-sustaining branches, the prosecution of more vigorous and well directed missionary effort, the organization of the mission office staff and work, the securing and handling of weekly reports from the missionaries and various other items which should be more or less reflected in the monthly and annual reports received from the mission. I recommend that most careful attention be given to these reports.

III. URUGUAYAN MISSION

1. I recommend that immediate consideration be given to the purchase of land adjacent to the newly acquired mission home as per description of plat hereunto attached. This additional land would serve the immediate purpose of providing some recreational facilities at moderate cost and would likewise provide space for a permanent recreational hall and chapel if the success in this mission in the future should warrant the same. The land seems to be so much in demand, being in a rapidly growing section of the city that it is not likely that any loss would be entailed in a future disposition of it.
2. I recommend that gas be installed in the mission home to supplant kerosene as the fuel at a cost of approximately \$500.00. The Church owns a gas stove and the sale of the kerosene equipment would realize approximately \$150.00. The number of meals served in the mission home makes it highly desirable to have gas and it is estimated that the difference in the cost of kerosene and gas would pay for the installation in about four years time.
3. I recommend that table silverware be purchased for the mission home for the service of 18 people. Stainless steel was sent when the home was furnished and will do for everyday use but is not compatible with the dignity of this fine home, especially in the entertainment of the kind of guests which come from President William's contacts. The silverware should be purchased in the United States and sent down, either with missionaries, or to Brother and Sister Harold Brown through the mailing facilities of the United States Embassy.
4. I attach hereto an express direction prepared by President Williams for the transmission of funds to the mission and missionaries.
5. I recommend the organization of a branch of this mission in Asuncion, Paraguay. Major Samuel Skousen, a former Argentine missionary, and now an attaché of the United States Government located in this city could be most helpful and direct

the work of the branch. There are at present 14 American members of the Church residing there, all connected with the government. Not all are active, but a good work could be done among them. There is also a native family very much interested who have asked for baptism. It would furnish an opportunity to project the work in that country and under the leadership of Major Skousen would not require an undue amount of attention from the mission president. I would not recommend that missionaries be sent there at the present time, but the organization of the branch would give much encouragement to those who are interested and it could receive some supervision from President Williams. There is fairly good railroad, and other communication from Montevideo. I do not know the exact distance.

6. Literature and other missionary facilities are needed in this mission, as in Argentina.
7. President Williams reports that the cost of schooling in Montevideo for his four children averages about \$65.00 per month for a period of nine months of the year. The children attend an American school operated by the Methodist Church. He said this is the only school in which the children can study and receive credit for their studies in the United States. He says his allowance cannot be stretched to cover this additional cost and that his personal funds are not sufficient to enable him to pay it. I recommend that \$500.00 per school year be granted to him to cover this item.

#### IV. BRAZILIAN MISSION

1. I recommend that early consideration be given to the purchase of a mission home in Sao Paulo. The owner of the present rented home is restrained from increasing the rental by the rent controls now in force. If and when the mission president is changed he has given notice he will consider the present month to month tenancy terminated; that he will then exact a greatly increased rental which he has indicated would be three or four hundred percent higher. The house is not nearly large enough for a mission home and office. A better location could

also be secured. I advised the mission presidency to make recommendation.

2. I recommend that as soon as feasible all meetings in German be discontinued and that the Portuguese language only be used in missionary work. All of the young people and most of the old people do all their business in Portuguese. Very few, if any, do not understand Portuguese and the use of German has to a certain extent prejudiced our work.
3. I recommend that better meeting places in better sections of the cities be secured even though higher rentals will be entailed. I do not believe it wise to attempt any building at this time, except possibly in Campin[a]s where there is a very promising branch and where steps are now being taken by the Saints to secure a building lot. They deserve encouragement.
4. I recommend that the missionary effort in Brazil be largely confined to the cities where we are at present maintaining missionaries. In fact I have suggested to President Rex that we withdraw from some distant places and concentrate in a little more compact area. At best transportation and communication are very difficult and an immense amount of time and effort is consumed in visiting the districts and branches, and also in getting missionaries to and from inaccessible places. I feel we will be better able to prosecute the work in less far-flung areas and watch the results.
5. Immediate attention should be given to plans for providing more literature and missionary facilities. There is a great dearth of missionary help in Portuguese.
6. The transmission of funds to this mission should receive the same consideration as to the other South American missions.
7. It is in this area that the missionaries suffer most from excessive charges for permanent visas. I recommend that we communicate with President Edmunds<sup>7</sup> of Chicago in an endeavor to establish friendly relations with the Brazilian Consulate in that city.

8. I recommend that President Rex<sup>s</sup> be advised to dispose of the new Studebaker automobile as advantageously as possible and secure one of the lighter and cheaper ones.
9. President Rex has invested considerable money in powdered milk in order to supply the missionaries with a safe drink. He represents that he has secured good prices which will be advantageous to the missionaries but I think the practice of maintaining a mission commissary account in foodstuffs is questionable.
10. Attention should be called to the difficulty of administering a mission with a little family and babies in the mission home.

#### V. CONCLUSION

1. The progress of South American missions should be checked as carefully as possible by close examination of reports by correspondence and by interviewing returned missionaries. The health of the missionaries should be especially observed and checked by inquiries from headquarters. The expense of a visit to the South American missions by one of the General Authorities is so heavy that an annual visit would perhaps not be justified. But if provision could be made so that each mission president during his tenure of office could receive a visit it would probably be very helpful. At least not more than five years should elapse between such visits.

Many of the foregoing suggestions and recommendations need elaboration and undoubtedly some important items have escaped attention. I shall be very pleased to confer with the Presidency on any point.

I propose to file with your office a brief historical sketch of our visit to the South American missions.

Faithfully yours,  
Stephen L Richards

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**Sunday, October 3, 1948**

**STEPHEN L RICHARDS GENERAL CONFERENCE ADDRESS<sup>9</sup>**

*Address delivered at the Sunday afternoon session of the 119th Semiannual General Conference, October 3, 1948, in the Tabernacle.*

I have been deeply moved by this conference, my brethren and sisters, and my inclination would be to spend my allotted time in lending support and sanction to the great messages which have come to us. I have, however, another obligation that I feel I must discharge.

***Report of South American Trip***

My wife and I returned from South America last spring just a day or two too late to attend the April conference. While I have spoken of some of my experiences in a few of the stake conferences, I have thought that I should make a report to the Church on our visits to these missions in the southern continent.

Perhaps it might be well at the outset just to refresh your geographical memories a little. South America is not only south of North America, but it is almost entirely east of the United States, so that during nearly all of the time we spent away we were four hours, or time zones, east of Salt Lake City, and only two time zones west of London. Our travels consumed about eighteen thousand miles, so you see we here at home are a long way from our fellow members in the missions of South America, and because of that difference and the fact that about twenty-two years had elapsed since that country was visited by General Authorities, you will readily understand that we were awaited with a royal welcome.

We left Salt Lake City on the last day of December last year. We spent about two weeks in Washington D.C., and in New York in securing letters of introduction to prominent business people in the south, and also in interviews at the embassies of the countries we intended to visit, where we were introduced through the courtesy of our Congressional representatives. We never did secure time enough to present all of these letters, but

we had the satisfaction of making our mission presidents acquainted with some prominent men who may be of some aid in the future.

It was bitter cold when we left New York harbor, with some of the water pipes of the ship frozen, so I assure you it was altogether agreeable, after a few days, to come into a warmer climate. However, we found that you can often get too much of a good thing, and when we reached Rio de Janeiro in the middle of their summer, comparable to our July, in a heat wave more intense than they had had in four years, we longed for the snow and ice we had so recently left. You know you can usually protect yourself against the cold, but you can't against the heat, and I am sure I prolonged my visit to the few air-conditioned offices where I presented letters of introduction, beyond the bounds of strict propriety. I hope it wasn't too obvious. Down in Sao Paulo, the headquarters of the Brazilian Mission, it was a little bit more temperate because that has some elevation above the sea, and Montevideo and Buenos Aires are farther south and in a more temperate zone.

### ***"Divine Services" Conducted***

Soon after we boarded the ship, we were happy to learn that there were seven missionaries aboard, and one member of the Church in the ship's employ. With the assistance of these good folk, on the request of the ship's command, we conducted what were called "divine services" on the two Sundays of the voyage. The missionaries were all splendid young men. I am sure they made an excellent impression. On the way home, on the same ship and a sister ship, we were asked to conduct three more Sunday services, so that I began to feel that I ought to have been put on the ship's payroll. That hope vanished early, however, when it was learned that we didn't preach for hire. The captain, however, rewarded me somewhat by giving me the rather rare privilege of going on the bridge of the vessel with an officer guide to explain the mysteries of automatic steering and radar, and when I was escorted to the huge engine room where I inspected one of the greatest power plants I have ever seen, I felt quite rewarded for my preaching.

We arrived in Buenos Aires, headquarters of the Argentine Mission, in the morning. We could see from the ship's deck the mission president, and his wife, and the missionaries and Saints gathered to meet us. It was

noon, however, before we could greet them. The time consumed in getting baggage through customs and in the inspection of visas and securing medical permits, is very considerable, I assure you.

### ***Inconvenience of Receiving Packages***

In this connection I would like to broadcast the counsel throughout the Church to all parents and friends of missionaries in the South American missions, not to send to the missionaries packages at Christmas, or any other time, containing articles which are not essential to them in their work. It often requires many hours and sometimes days of the precious time of missionaries, or the mission staff, to get packages out of customs, and a box of stale cookies which has spent two or three months on the way, even though it carries a lot of love and sentiment from the folk at home isn't worth it. An airmail letter on thin paper with a ten-cent stamp is a far more expeditious and satisfactory message of your affection and encouragement under the circumstances that prevail in South America.

There is a word in frequent use in South America which expresses a quality wholly necessary to peace of mind. It is the word *paciencia* meaning patience. Everybody takes his time about doing things, the government and its agencies, especially. The sooner you learn this the happier you are.

### ***Hospitable Reception***

Well, we finally got through customs to enjoy the welcome and greetings of our patient friends. I will say just a word about our reception at the Laniers Branch of the Argentine Mission in Buenos Aires, because this was typical of the hospitality and greeting of the Saints and missionaries throughout the missions. The Laniers Branch is the largest of all the branches of the Church in South America, and is one of the very few which owns its own place of meeting, which is a very modest one. On this occasion there were gathered about four hundred members of the Church and friends. The hall was crowded. It had been decorated with flowers and streamers, and presented an attractive appearance. An elaborate program had been prepared, with both amateur and professional talent, consisting of speeches, singing, and folk dancing rendered in Spanish and native costume, with some interpretations for our benefit. Children participated



liberally. Some of the skits and songs had been specially written, and the whole program represented the expenditure of a large amount of time and effort in preparation. As a climax, Sister Richards was presented with beautiful flowers which grow in profusion in that country. On one occasion the orchids given to her hung from her shoulder almost to her knee. I know the ladies will take note of that.

I was given a beautifully ornamented cake made by some of the good sisters. I am not supposed to eat cake, but I soon discovered that the missionaries have good appetites without many restrictions, and I assure you that none of the cake given to me was wasted.

It was in this welcoming social that we were first made really to feel the sentiment and spirit of our fellow members of the Church in those distant lands. They were respectful and reverent almost to an embarrassing degree. I am not used to having my hand kissed, a custom which is a holdover that some of the older people have kept, from the traditions and practices of their earlier affiliations. They were warm-hearted, and for the most part demonstrative and impulsive. It was apparent that the fellowship promoted by the Church had found a place in their lives, and particularly among the sisters I noted that affectionate regard for each other which we so frequently see at home. It was apparent that nearly all were in humble circumstances, although many were tastefully and somewhat stylishly dressed. Particularly was this true of the girls. They were, however, a little short on the latest fashions. The long skirts had not yet reached them.

### ***Many Nationalities Represented***

It was evident that many nationalities were represented, with a preponderance of the brunette people from Spain, Italy, and the Mediterranean countries. There were a few of German and English extraction, but far more from southern than from northern Europe. This group of people which we first met were typical in their racial composition, of the groups we met in all the missions. The stocks from southern Europe prevail. Spanish is the national language in Argentina and Uruguay, and in Brazil, the Portuguese. I talked with a number of families in Brazil who prided themselves on pure Portuguese blood. It so happens, however, that our work in both Argentina and Brazil was begun in the German language,

among immigrants from Germany. We still have a few German groups of Saints, where German is spoken, but this practice is being discontinued.

It should be said here, for the information of the Church, that our South American missions do substantially no work among the Lamanite people, and so far as I know, we have no Indian members of the Church in these missions. I met a few Indian boys who were attending school at one of the universities in Argentina who had come from Peru. The missionaries had made friends with them, and they took part on one of our programs. They were small-statured, but seemed intelligent and kindly disposed, and some day perhaps our work may be carried to their country.

### *Distrust in Evidence*

My observation that the Latin Americans are predominantly from the southern European stocks led me to wonder how susceptible these people are to the teachings and influence of the gospel. I recalled that in more than one hundred years we have done little or no missionary work in Spain, Italy, Portugal, and adjacent countries. Perhaps this may be the means, in South America, of some day approaching those countries. I thought I could see in the disposition, customs and practices of these South Americans some of the reasons which have impeded gospel work among them. They are people who have suffered many impositions. They have not been trained and nurtured in the kind of freedoms which northern Europeans and North Americans have enjoyed, in consequence of which, perhaps, they have become by nature suspicious and distrustful. American businessmen told me that after many years of business dealings they were unable to build up that mutual confidence and friendship with native South Americans which may be established in a few weeks or months among our own people. The buildings and homes of the people are indicative of this distrust. Everything is walled in. Even a little home is usually surrounded by a wall six, ten, twelve feet in height, almost unscalable, with a locked gate and sometimes broken glass on top of the wall as a protection against neighbors and others who ought to be counted friends.

All this has a bearing on our missionary work, as you will readily see. Homes are not easily accessible. Interviews are difficult and it takes a long time to build up that confidence which is essential to friendship and mutual understanding. Tracting is attended with difficulties, not only be-

cause of walls and locked gates, but because customs are new and strange to our missionaries. During the daytime men folk are not at home, except perhaps for the siesta period, when they are not to be disturbed. This siesta takes a big portion out of a day. Places of business close from twelve to three o'clock, and our missionaries are greatly limited in their opportunities to make contacts. In some sections they were beginning evening tracting in the hope of meeting the families at what would seem to us late hours. I have not heard yet what success attended these experiments.

In the main our missionary work is prosecuted through the medium of *locales*. A *local* is usually a small rented building which serves as a home for the missionaries and a place of meeting in carrying forward Church activities for the groups who attend. One room in the *local* is fitted out to serve as a little church modestly equipped with a pulpit, a small organ and benches. Owing to the housing shortage which prevails in South America as it does with us, it has been very difficult to secure *locales* in good locations of the cities, and we have often been forced to take places in poor localities.

### ***Civilization Centers in Cities***

It should be noted that all civilized life in South America centers in the big cities. There is very little agricultural or rural life, as we know it. The vast livestock ranches of Argentina, and the coffee plantations of Brazil are owned by wealthy families who live in the big cities and who dominate the whole agricultural field. The independent farm owner and operator is almost unknown. This situation is material to our missionary work. We do no country work. Our missionaries visit no farm homes so productive of investigators and converts in other countries. They are not allowed, without permits, even to enter the great ranches and plantations. One of the greatest needs apparent in the countries we visited is a division of the lands for a far greater productivity and realization of the vast resources of the countries, and more importantly, for the establishment of an independent, vigorous middle class of landowners and workers.

South America is a land of violent contrasts—the very beautiful and the very ugly; the very rich and the very poor; the very intellectual and sophisticated, and the very ignorant. Of course, countries differ in these respects, but everywhere there is conspicuously lacking that strong middle

class which is the backbone of our own and other progressive countries. I saw some indications that this class may be growing. In some industrial centers, such as Sao Paulo in Brazil, when and if it grows, our missionary work will have more assurance of success. It takes humility and intelligence to understand and receive the restored gospel. The aristocracy lack the humility, and the poor and destitute often lack in good measure the intelligence.

### *Promising Prospects Among Youth*

Our most promising prospects are among the youth in all the countries. They are forward-looking, and they are emerging from some of the distrust and suspicion which has so retarded the progress of their elders. These young people have admiration for many things in America. They learn about us largely through the picture shows. Unfortunately, through this medium they do not always get correct impressions of the best part of our North American life. It's a shame that we have to be advertised by the most effective advertising there is, for our gangsterism, infidelity, frivolity, and cheap wit. These young people, however, see our automobiles, our clothes, our fine homes in the pictures, and they think they would like to have some of these things. They want to learn English and our missionaries capitalize on this desire and teach many of them English. English classes are held in the *locales*. The young people who come in contact with our missionaries develop a great admiration for them—for their fine, clean manhood, their friendliness and their serious work. Mutual Improvement Associations are begun, and gradually the gospel plan unfolds before these people, and they are given an entirely new vision of abundant and rich living with purpose and incentive, even in their poverty.

I saw some branches of the mission made up and carried forward entirely by young people. Of course, there are older people, too, who have proved susceptible to gospel teaching, but in the main I feel that our hope lies with the youth.

South America desperately needs the restored gospel. The nations of that land need, more than anything else, the true concepts of liberty which arise out of a correct understanding of the relationship of man to God and his fellow man. They need a comprehension of justice, equity, and equality. They need to understand more perfectly the dignity of

work, and, of course, they need the enlightenment of education. As one man said who gave me a letter of introduction to business associates in South America: "South America needs what the Mormon Church has to offer."

Our missionaries are trying hard to give these things to the people who so sorely need them. Their work is conducted at great expense. It costs more than one thousand dollars in transportation alone to put a missionary in one of these missions and bring him home. Living costs are very high, even in American money,

which sells at a premium. The language is difficult, particularly the Portuguese, and many months pass before a missionary can adequately express himself before the people. However, they, our missionaries, carry with them a spirit, and the testimony of truth which, even imperfectly expressed in the language of the people, touches the hearts of many who hear them.



*Elder Richards and President Young at the podium in Argentina. Courtesy of CHL.*

### ***Missionaries and Saints Faithful***

Now I found in all the missions a great enthusiasm among the missionaries for their work. They have developed a love for the people, which lies at the base of all good missionary labors, and they, under the direction of their mission presidents, are organizing and planning to meet the conditions. We also have some very faithful Saints who are great aids in promoting our work. I saw some very good work being carried forward by small branches of the missions—Sunday Schools and Primaries where little children are being taught; priesthood classes where men and boys are learning their duties; Relief Societies and welfare workers are carrying forward commendable projects. Generally, the groups were small and largely dependent upon the missionaries, but there was promise in them.

Perhaps the most stimulating of any exercises I saw were the baptismal ceremonies. We had the privilege of being present at two, one in Argentina and one in the interior of Brazil. Nothing is more encouraging to missionaries and to members of the Church than to see the fruits of their labors and the happiness which comes to those who ally themselves with the work of the Lord. In each service, six to ten were baptized into the Church.

If time permitted, I would tell you some rather interesting aspects of these baptismal services, but it does not. After all, this is the great encouragement to our missionaries. The realization of knowing that they may have been the means of bringing peace—peace of mind and peace to the heart and soul of some one of God's children who has humbled himself



THE RICHARDESSES WITH THE MISSIONARIES. COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY.

to seek the truth. I am not able to say how many in South America will respond to the spirit and message we bear, but I am sure we are doing our duty, fulfilling divine command, when we carry the word of our Lord to all lands and peoples.

### ***Gratitude for Visit***

I acknowledge my gratitude to the First Presidency in extending to me the opportunity of making this visit, and I also acknowledge the innumerable courtesies and kindnesses shown to my wife and me by the mission presidents and their wives, the missionaries, and Saints, and friends of the South American missions. It was an unforget[t]able experience. If any good to the noble cause, which I love, shall come of it, I shall be very grateful.

I pray that the Lord may bless our missionaries in all lands and the Saints who are scattered over the earth. I trust that they may all feel as we tried to make them feel in South America, that we are all one in the Church of Christ, that even though we may be widely separated, we can reach out over the lands and the oceans and extend the handclasp of fellowship and good brotherhood to our members throughout the globe. I think this was the message which they, in the southern hemisphere, appreciated more than any other. They wanted to be assured that they were one with us and we with them. The day will come, my brothers and sisters, when the mighty cause with which we have the honor to be associated, will bring to pass that unity in a divided and stricken world. God grant it may come soon I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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## **NOTES**

1. "Missionary Work in South America Makes Definite Gain," *Church News*, April 17, 1948.
2. Stephen L Richards Final Report to First Presidency after Trip to South America, May 10, 1948, Stephen L Richards Papers, 1921–59, CHL.
3. Frederick S. Williams was president of the Uruguayan Mission.
4. Eduardo Balderas was a Church employee in charge of Spanish translation at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City.

5. L. Pierce Brady was a counselor in the Argentine Mission presidency.
6. Yerba mate is an herbal tea that is very popular in Argentina and parts of South America. It does contain caffeine. The chemicals in it are less harsh than coffee, tea, and green tea.
7. John K. Edmunds was president of the Chicago Stake.
8. Harold M. Rex was president of the Brazilian Mission.
9. Stephen L Richards, in Conference Report, October 3, 1948, 144–51.