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Fortaleza Industrialists Seek Solutions to University Crisis

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Industries of Ceará;

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PLACE: Federation Offices in Downtown Fortaleza

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Mr. Gondim made the following comments of interest:

SUMMARY

The Ceará Federation of Industries, taking its cue from the Rio-based National Industrial Confederation, is seeking means by which its members might contribute to easing the current university crisis. A Federation working group will meet with student leaders during the coming week to discuss means of reducing tension. Businessmen are particularly concerned with the adverse effects student disorders have on the nation's economy. All elements of the community must work together to eliminate the prevailing climate of insecurity and instability and to re-establish the confidence of the nation's youth in the future.

The Federation of Industries of Ceará is examining ways in which the business community might contribute to a solution of the university crisis which currently faces the state and nation. A working group, selected from the Federation's membership, will soon meet with student leaders and university professors to discuss means of easing the atmosphere of tension in Fortaleza.

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The Ceará industrialists are taking their example from the National Industrial Confederation. Concerned by the adverse affect of student disorders on the nation's economy, the Confederation more than a month ago named its own study group to look into the situation. Upon investigation, the group found that many of the strictly university-related grievances of the students were in fact valid. Foremost among student concerns seemed to be general dismay at the insecurity and lack of opportunity which the future seemed to hold for university graduates. The investigators were astounded to learn, for example, that almost 60 percent of the 1967 graduates of the Engineering School of the Catholic University in Rio were still unemployed. Following extensive interviews with students and faculty members in Rio de Janeiro, the study group presented to President Costa e Silva a number of suggestions designed to calm the tense atmosphere.

A by-product of the work of the Confederation study group was the dispatch of a circular letter to all 19 regional Federations suggesting that they too seek means of collaborating in reducing student tensions. The Ceará initiative results from this suggestion.

The Federation had originally intended to begin talks with student leaders during the current week (week of August 12-16). The Fortaleza situation, however, took a turn for the worse making preliminary contacts with student leaders inadvisable. The Federation believes it will serve little purpose to attempt talks while students are still "in the streets." Initial discussions have correspondingly been postponed until next week.

Businessmen are particularly well qualified to offer assistance in such fields as university administration. Many of the most acute problems facing Brazilian universities result directly from financial considerations, despite the fact that university budgets have been increased substantially in recent years. The problem in many, if not most, instances is less one of inadequate funds than of poor management of available resources. Businessmen with experience in financial management could clearly aid university administrations in solving problems in this field. Accordingly, the Federation is considering a recommendation suggesting that businessmen serve on university councils without remuneration in an advisory capacity. Such a suggestion was in fact made to the President by the National Industrial Confederation study group.

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