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FROM : AmConGen RIO DE JANEIRO

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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ANALYST: BRANCH
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SUBJECT : The Political Role of Labor in Brazil - 1972

REF :

SUMMARY

The labor force in Brazil currently plays only a minor role in the country's political affairs. Some labor leaders appear anxious to please the government, but the actions of these "pellegos" are eyed suspiciously by the rank and file. Government programs developed for the workers are long on promise, short on performance. Businessmen, both foreign and national, are content with the strong role which the government plays in worker affairs. The AIFLD's one-half million dollar per year program emphasizes workers' training, with particular attention given to the rural sector.

1. The Work Force

Preliminary data of the 1970 census disclosed that the economically-active population in Brazil totalled approximately 30 million workers. Of that amount, about 16 million were employed by others, 10 million were self-employed, 4 million were employers. Slightly less than 3 million of the thirty million figure worked (largely on farms) without remuneration. Forty percent of the national labor force were engaged in agriculture. The next largest category was industrial workers.

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2. Political Unimportance of the Worker

Labor currently is a sector of little political concern to the GOB. This is not to say that workers may not be important at some future time. But now, they are generally docile, non-militant and accept the fact that the government makes all major decisions for them. Except for a very few who balance on the thin line dividing such legitimate activity as is permitted in Brazil and a more militant labor role common to other Latin American countries, there are not many labor leaders with the desire or drive to change the current state of affairs. Among all of the organized workers, only the bank workers and the metal workers can be regarded as having strong, relatively independent, labor movements.

Some communists are known to be active among the workers, but the government control is paramount. The Communist Party, as an organization, and party members individually within the organized labor movement, are currently without power or leverage.

3. "Pellegos" are Important in the Leadership of Some of Brazil's Confederations and Federations

"Pellegos" are labor leaders who are responsive primarily to the government's wishes rather than giving priority to the desires of the labor membership itself. One prominent pellego, for example, is Ary Campista, Secretary General of the Confederation of Industrial Workers (CNTI), Brazil's largest labor confederation. Campista has maneuvered himself into positions of prominence in all of the administrations over the past twenty years. It is commonly believed that he willingly follows government guidance in return for the favors the government is able to grant to him. There are others, too, such as some relative newcomers who have achieved prominence since the "revolution", who have accommodated themselves to positions on government-directed agencies or who enjoy trips to foreign countries for international conferences. They gain extra income; they appear to be quite content with the higher standard of living which results from their situation. In return for their subservience to government policy -- for they would not hold their positions if they were not subservient to government policy -- they give up their

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now is attempting to develop its own course of labor education. It hopes to implement a requirement that labor leaders must have taken one of the government's own classes in financial administration in order to remain in a position of labor leadership.

6. Government Programs for the Worker

The efforts of President Medici to do things for the workers were epitomized in the announcement by the government of a Program for Social Integration. This was widely heralded by the Labor Ministry as a program to care for the workers' future. While it may provide some benefits in the future, its present benefits for the workers are practically nil. The government also publicized loan programs for unions and promised to equip the worker organizations with medical and dental facilities. Here again, the publicity about the government's program far exceeded the actual benefits. The government decrees a minimum wage for all workers at all levels for different locations in the country. This minimum wage level is revised each year to reflect the inflation in the cost of living and is respected quite well in Brazil's major cities. However, a majority of the workers in the rural areas and in the economically-depressed Northeast zone do not share in these benefits.

BOONSTRA

