

Central
POL 13-6

UNCLASSIFIED

RECIFE REPORT # 47
May 29, 1968

TO: Embassy Office BRASILIA
INFO: Embassy Office RIO DE JANEIRO
FROM: Accusul RECIFE
SUBJECT: Bishops of Rio Grande do Norte Remind Voters of their
Electoral Responsibilities

The three bishops of Rio Grande do Norte last week issued a joint manifesto to the voters of the state reminding them of their electoral responsibilities. After noting with satisfaction a growing sentiment in support of social change, the document warns of the many pitfalls facing an uneducated and often passive electorate. It condemns the influence of money and economic groups in the choice of candidates and calls for an improvement in campaign standards. Candidates should be measured by their political preparation, their vision, their honesty, as well as their efficiency and capacity. Among good candidates one should choose the best; among bad candidates one should select the least bad. But, it concludes, all should vote.

COMMENT: The manifesto is the first manifestation, which has come to our attention, of formal Church interest in the coming elections. Rio Grande do Norte, it will be recalled, is one of the four states in the Northeast which will hold municipal elections this November. The document, for the most part a rather standard exhortation to civic virtue, is less of interest for its content than for the expression of official interest which it represents.

An informal translation of the text of the manifesto is attached.

HILLIER

cc: ARA/BR
IHR/SAR
IHR/CS/BR

Attachment a/s

POL:RBW:elton:jbs

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

RECIFE REPORT BY 47
ATTACHMENT

INFORMAL TRANSLATION

THE MANIFESTO

0

"In this period preceding the elections, the Church of Rio Grande do Norte, under our pastoral care, feels itself obligated to remind Catholics and all men of good will of their grave responsibilities in the choice of the leaders worthy and capable of finding a solution for the problems of the people and of working for the development of their land.

"We note with joy the growing desire, which animates many, in favor of profound changes in the social structures, inspired by the social doctrine of the Church. On the other hand, the system of choosing the candidates and of seeking votes causes us much preoccupation, because it is still debased by attitudes which are real offenses to the dignity of a human being.

"Ignorance, good faith, and the passivity of the electorate are all abused to secure election. Unfortunately, it is common in the period of elections to find exploitation (by dishonest means) with the purchase of votes, the exchange of votes for employment or threat of expulsion from employment, etc.

"We appeal to the party leaders to sound out the conscience of the people before presenting the candidates who should measure up to the legitimate aspirations of the people. We recall that politics should be at the service of the common welfare and never serve the private interests of economic or family groups.

"We vehemently condemn the influence of economic groups and of money itself in the choice of candidates and in the acquisition of votes. Those doing this are responsible before God for the disastrous consequences such action brings.

"We deplore the depressing spectacle during political rallies of personal attacks placing in doubt the civic character of the popular meetings, transforming them into anti-democratic manifestations without respect for the human being and without love for one's neighbor. The rally is the time for speaking to the people about the program which the candidate intends to carry out and to give account of what he has already done for the common good.

"Desiring that the electors shall fulfill in the best possible manner their duty at the ballot boxes and with a view only of assisting them, we offer the following guidance:

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

RECIFE REPORT NO 47
ATTACHMENT - p. 2

"The vote is the arm of the people to be used with seriousness and conscientiousness in the struggle for the common good. We remind them that votes cannot be bought or sold. Friendship is repaid with friendship. Money with money. Favor with favor. None of these can be bought with a vote.

"All the electorate should vote. To abstain from voting is to deny your contribution to the serious matter of electing those who should direct the destinies of our land. Among good candidates we should choose the best. Among bad candidates we should select the least bad.

"The value of a candidate is measured by his political preparation, his vision of the social problem, his professional honesty, and his efficiency and capacity to perform a given task, with a view to promoting the individual and the integral development of his community and region.

"We are confident in the grace of God, and we hope that Rio Grande do Norte can live in peace during the campaign and that this manifestation of a democratic state will be a decisive step toward greater public awareness, as a means of avoiding the deception of the masses and of working for the common good with a view to the overall and individual development of our society.

"This is our pastoral word and our guidance said indispensable during this historic moment in which we live. We ask our priests, religious and laymen, to work so that these criteria shall become known to all and shall bear the fruit of justice and peace in the Rio Grande do Norte community."

DOM NIVALDO MOUTE
DOM GENIL DINIZ BARRETO
DOM MANGEL TAVARES

UNCLASSIFIED