

colombian finds americans lack knowledge of other cultures

by paula dittrick

Carlos Jimenez is a city boy from Colombia studying agriculture at UNL. Cofounder and president of the UNL Latin American Association, he described Nebraskans as shy and hard to get to know.

He said he helped organize the association because he saw a need for Latin Americans and their friends "to get united. It's a survival type of thing."

The association has about 50 members. Membership is open to anyone. Jimenez said the American members are girlfriends and boyfriends of Latin American members.

The agronomy and horticulture senior said he found many east campus students came from the same towns and had gone to high school together before coming to UNL. He said a foreigner has trouble becoming part of such a group.

"I feel students here are not taking real advantage of foreign people," Jimenez said. Many students do not try to learn about the foreign students' culture.

He said he was urged to join American groups. However he said he believed Americans also need to try to get to know him.

He described Nebraskans as "real nice" once he got to know them, but he criticized the American government for not teaching students more about other cultures. He said he had to learn English and French before graduating from high school.

Jimenez urged everyone to go overseas to live and use a foreign language. He said in America he encountered a cultural difference and had to learn the ways of this country. He said in America he encountered a cultural difference and had to learn the ways of his country.

He said he had no trouble getting permission to study in the United States because of some people in Florida who had been in the Peace Corps and who had lived in his house in Colombia. He also has relatives living in North Platte.

Jimenez said it is hard to get an educa-



Photo by Tim Ford

Carlos Jimenez is cofounder and president of the UNL Latin American Association.

tion in Colombia because students often strike at the government owned agriculture schools. He said it would take him about three more years to graduate in Colombia than it will take at UNL because of problems in his country.

He described most Latin Americans as being pleased about the Panama Canal treaties. However, he said he thought 20 years was too long to wait until the canal is turned over to Panama.

The U.S. Senate ratified a treaty concerning canal neutrality after the year 2000 when Panama is slated to take control of the canal. The second treaty established the process for turning the canal over to Panama.

Jimenez said his country has a poverty problem and lacks a strong educational system. He added that unemployment is high and the government does not subsidize the farmers.

He said he agreed with the American Farm Movement but noted that these farmers are 100 percent better off than Colombian farmers. Coffee is his country's main crop but he said he believed Colombia could produce other crops and become more self sufficient.

Foreign investors are trying to keep coffee the main Colombia crop, he said.

The economy of my country is based on coffee," Jimenez added that high costs made the increased coffee price necessary.

He said he hopes to work on a farm near North Platte this summer and to attend graduate school in California next year. He said he wants to be an extension agent for the Colombian government when he returns. However, much of the specialized knowledge he has learned about modern techniques, such as using fertilizers and sophisticated farm equipment, will not be used back home.

Noting other changes between cultures, he said he liked to watch the American woman's lifestyle. American women are given more jobs and the opportunity to express their opinions than are Colombian women.

However, he said Colombian women are trying to become more liberated. Slave is not the way to describe the Colombian woman's lifestyle, he said. However, he added that she is given little chance for an education and is expected to get married and care for her children.

He praised President Carter in his drive for human rights, but criticized Russia for trying to dictate what his government should be like. Colombia and Venezuela are the only democratic countries in Latin America.

He said he believes Americans should be more open to ideas from abroad and less eager to claim that the United States is always the best or always has the right answers.

congratulating him about the show.

"This community likes the Latin American movement," said the UNL junior. "Whatever I have tried to do, they (Americans) have responded to me."

He said he worried about how his accent would transmit but he was told listeners like the accent because it assures them "a real Latin American guy" is producing the show.

The program has included guests discussing different issues about various Latin American countries. He said these speakers live in Lincoln but added that he hopes to recruit speakers from other universities.

His musical ensemble, Venezuelan Style is composed of UNL Venezuelan students, who have temporarily disbanded to

concentrate on their studies, Siso said. Venezuelan Style qualified for the national finals of the "Bob Hope Search for the Top in Collegiate Talent." However, the members already had made plans to return home for Christmas and missed the Jan. 4 final competition.

Siso said he never expected the group or his radio show to be received so warmly. He added that he has not done anything to promote the radio program.

Lincoln East High and Pius X high school spanish classes have been instructed to listen to his program, Siso said.

Calling himself a cultural ambassador for his country, he said he asked KZUM board of directors about producing a Latin

American program.

He was told to bring a sample program which the board approved. The non-commercial station finances itself by soliciting donations through subscription memberships. Siso said the program cost him nothing.

Siso said he had no broadcast experience before the show. "I like it. I need a lot of experience, but I know what I'm doing," he said. He does all the planning himself.

Siso said Americans have been open to his ideas and he has not run into any stereotype difficulties.

"I don't belong to the government. I don't represent the government. You represent your country or your love for the country."

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