

THE PROBLEM OF THE HOUR

By. R. R. DE ARANA

Is it agrarian? Many say it is—we believe otherwise. After some careful analyses, you will find out too. Some say it is a ticklish problem. It is not so because it does not hurt anybody in particular. The growth of any nation and its people is fraught with ticklish problems. It is the law of nature, and "cause and effect" solves these ticklish problems and advances the nation. Mistakes correct the peoples' ills. We must accept them as such and with vigor and thought, overcome them. It is the only wise course to follow to be content and happy people.

A poor man who acquires wealth in the long run, after a fling at travel and city life finally settles in the country on a farm. A rich man necessarily longs for a country home for relaxation. It seems that at the back of every man's mind, if he could afford it, is to buy a farm big or small, with that beautiful country home surrounded by tall trees and gardens and lawns. The proverbial swimming pool must be there and where chicken, vegetables, fruits, and milk abound. This dream to those who don't have the money becomes a reality when they acquire wealth. The Hollywood stars are examples of this. Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, Bing Crosby, and a legion of stars who were once poor realized that dream. Rich men of America have their farms. As a matter of fact the great men of America were raised on the farm and those who were not raised there, have farms just the same. And this observation is true of the English Lords, French Counts, German Barons, Argentine Gaucho Kings, Australian Ranchers, Russian peasants, Oriental philosophers, etc. Land is the backbone of every country whether rich or poor. The poorest to the richest country, agriculture is the firmest foundation of food, shelter, and clothing. And for this reason, as man comes from "dust," he is attracted by nature and is always subconsciously seeking in life to work and profit and derive happiness from it.

Agriculture is truly from time immemorial, the most noble, most profitable materially and spiritually or otherwise, profession. It is the most romantic for that matter and the most healthy. It is not only the Philippine backbone but any country's backbone in peace, and more so in war. Ame-

rica with all her industrial developments still depends on her farms for food. Without her farms today, she would not be able to feed the world in spite of all her industries. Without her farms, she could not have won the war. It is perhaps the farm that will win for her and for all of us, our peace. Russia's might today is in a large measure due to her agricultural development and progress. Germany wanted her for her farm produce, her wheat granary, not her might or industries. It was what her land gave and gives that communism is what it is today. As it was the farm and its produce that made America and democracy what it is today. The fat of the land is the secret of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Land is the body and its produce the soul of every country. It is agriculture that lays the golden egg. It is the true source of life and not gold or silver or iron or factories. It is the only profession that can stand alone without all the rest. From it, all other professions can come and grow but not vice-versa.

When the Spaniards conquered the Philippines, Spanish Dons were gifted by the king of Spain with large tracts of land here. The Spanish Generals assigned governors, practically owned the country. The Filipinos were mere slaves and because of this customary state of affairs, even Filipinos who became big and rich because of their friendship with high Spanish dignitaries of the church or state, developed an attitude of servility.

It was a common practice of the "Españoles" to use their cane with candor on the hide of the native if the native displeases them either in the privacy of their domicile with their "muchachos", and in public, if the native neighbor happens to forget to say "buenas noches Amo." This attitude of the Spanish masters therefore was acquired by the Filipinos when they too, acquired wealth or high government positions and became masters themselves. This mental outlook for generations became a national habit. With that habit also came the habit of "gifting lands" to Filipino favorites with Spanish titles, disregarding the real owners of the land—small farmers who by birthright worked that land for generations. He had no say when the "Ca-

besa de Barangay" or the "Guardia Civil" ejected him and his family out of the property unless he acceded to work as a tenant slave. Because the poor people were helpless, they bore all the injustices and humiliations with resignation. From such a resignation to fate, came the saying "once a tenant, always a tenant." Older people are familiar with this history.

Suffice that for a long time the people of the farms were not able to extricate themselves from this situation and their courage to voice out their feelings became lower and lower. They consoled their lot by their homespun philosophies and looked up to heaven and prayed and feared God and waited for miracles to happen. Their minds became stagnated it is true, but not their hearts. In their hearts they kept a prayer that someday, justice would be done them by God. They suffered the land grabbers, the irresponsible rich, the indifferent government. But they believed also that a future day would come when a showdown would happen, they knew not how, as they did not have the mind to reason it out, only their instincts told them so—it was a belief like their belief in their religion. This was the seed that later on would grow and fruit.

In the meantime, the rich hacenderos sucked all the fat of the land and loan sharks manipulated with lending money to their tenants to the extent that the grand-children-to-be of the head of the family of some tenants were buried in debt, so much so that there was no way of their leaving the land and work elsewhere for them, and their children to be, were tied down to work there until they paid up with their labor, and that was until their dying day. And these were not exceptional cases either. These were common in big haciendas in the Philippines. This state of affairs was often referred to by Dr. Rizal in his writings.

But as time passed on, some of the intelligent farmers' sons who had the opportunity to have some schooling started thinking. During the time of Rizal and thereafter, the poor began to have more courage to think of their lot. Their pent-up dreams of justice began to flicker.

America came and conquered the Philippines—freedom of thought was encouraged. Better government jobs were created and many "provincia-

nos" came to the city and studied and worked in government offices. The city became a land of paradise to them. And so, labor on the land became a shameful, lowly profession, in their opinion. White collared or office job was the thing they thought. On the other hand, the rich hacenderos at this time, began to build beautiful homes in the city, acquired "caruajes" and cars later on, and left their haciendas to their "encargados". These "encargados" with the exception of a few, also plundered the poor tenants with their authority to enrich themselves in turn, although in most cases they were of the blood of the tenants.

But the city contact and studies bore fruit for the tenant cause. Lawyers became plentiful and some of these lawyers became the medium of awakening the lethargy of the poor tenant. Their plight was reasoned out to them by these jobless young lawyers.

"Agitators" were born. Leader-agitators of tenants were all right in principle but in practice were generally racketeers who also took advantage of the poor tenants. Tenant Associations sprouted. An example of this group as the lawyer-leader-agitator would put it:

1. Any member or any member of his family would be defended free of charge, should he, or any member of his family, have a case in court (which never happened, if ever, very seldom).
2. All their grievances would be voiced by him in the papers and other means to prove their rights.
3. All members would be treated equally.
4. All they had to do was give as contribution to their association from one cavan of palay to four cavans, depending on their generosity during harvest.

To be sure, this was very good, the tenants thought. They would have a protector. What was one or two cavans of palay at harvest time? That was nothing. But a group of several hundreds, or a few thousand members, as in some cases with these associations, gave security in income and assured the lawyer-agitator from hunger. This is mentioned as historical detail because they, although immoral in principle, had their psychological effect on the tenants. Because of these associations, the tenants were set to thinking now more reasonably. The tenants began to have courage and recognized the wrong done them for scores of years.

They began to have confidence, to at least voice their rights. They knew they had a right now.

In Central Luzon, Associations grew. Socialism came in and complicated matters. The people did not recognize the difference. But because the poor "tao" like a floating mass of debris or a mother cricket in an inundated river in a storm of ignorance and doubt, had to grab and hang on to something like a sheltering rock, or they would sink and drown. They had to hang on to something, no matter what it was in principle, as long as that group or association defended their rights and protected their harvest share.

The landowners on the other hand, except for a few, continued leading a life of ease in the cities. These absentee landlords did not care what happened to their tenants as long as they received their usual share of the crops at harvest time, not recognizing what was transpiring in the hearts of their tenants. The seed of the belief of their ancestors that justice would be done them and themselves, became now a growing plant. It was now a reality.

Democratic form of life with the Americans, became a God-sent gift to them. Now, the tenants could go to the "municipio" and file a case against his own landlord. They now were their equals before the law. Added to these democratic rights, the government established nurseries and farms and opened up the eyes of the tenant to the wealth that could come from their labors.

In the Central Luzon provinces in the 1920's, democracy was on the march. But all along this time, the inhibitions of the tenants were not given freedom of expression in their farm practices as the absentee landlords threatened them with expulsion or court summons. They had not yet enough courage to face their masters in a court of justice. Therefore, outbursts of their passions once in a while, took the form of silent action of murder or theft or animal slaughter, at which the rich influential landlords hammered with the

law as unjust, ungrateful tenants, bunch of "outlaws to the hand that feeds them", and all sorts of complaints that drove the officers of the law, the constabulary then, to deal with an iron hand with the unfortunate victim or victims and with harshness at times.

The advent of President Quezon's "Social Justice Program" inspite of the Tenancy Law, was a step higher still in the ladder of the growing support to the interest of the tenant farmer. But tenant insistence of their prerogatives did not really bloom and took solid form until the Japanese subjugated and occupied the Philippines.

The Japanese regime drove the hacenderos from their farms. Life was cheap then and cheaper still in the provinces. This was the main reason why the rich, because of their means, stayed continuously in the cities, where there was some semblance of law and order. Now, the tenants began to have real control of their work and harvest. The encargado now for fear of being denounced and be a victim of the guerrillas by information to the effect that he is pro-Jap or, conversely, be a victim of the Japs by his name being given as supporter of the guerrillas, loosened up in his vigilance of tenants. And the landowners, valuing their lives after all more than their property, did not mind their losses, completely resigned to their fate because of fear of death. Now, for more than three long years, the tenants took of the fruit of the land to themselves. Now, the harvest was all theirs. Now, the dream of justice was fully realized. Now, they became obsessed with ownership of the land, for it was good to feel secure in the abundance of food. This was the climax to the new order of thought. Now, they developed courage and confidence in themselves, strong enough, to face their landlords in any court and for that matter, in majority of cases, with arrogance. This was the result of pent-up inhibitions for so long that now had free expression.

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Vicente Gotamco Hermanos

SAW MILL, LUMBER DEALERS & BUILDING CONTRACTORS

HARRISON SUBDIVISION, PASAY

Phone

430 Tanduy

MANILA, P. I.

With Our...

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Should the term of the lease be ten years or more, a reappraisal may be made every five years from the date of the approval of the lease or permit. The Director of Forestry may request the assistance of the provincial treasurer or assessor of the province in which the land lies or may appoint a committee for such purpose in the province or in the municipality in which the land lies.

SEC. 8. Before any lease or permit is issued under the provisions of this Act, the applicant may, as guaranty of good faith in filing the application and for the satisfactory compliance with the terms and conditions of the lease or permit and the payment of rental charges due thereon, be required to deposit with the Director of Forestry a cash bond, a Philippine National Bank Bond, or a bond of the Government of the Philippines, or any political subdivision thereof in an amount to be determined by the Director of Forestry with the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture and Commerce. In case the bond required exceeds two hundred pesos, a bond duly executed by a reputed surety company may be accepted, but in such case it shall be increased by not less than twenty-five per centum nor more than seventy-five per centum in the discretion of the Director of Forestry. This bond may be confiscated by the Government in case of any violation on the part of the lessee or permittee of any of the terms of the lease or permit.

SEC. 9. The Director of Forestry may, with the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture and Commerce, grant pasture lease agreements by auction or bidding after proper investigation of the areas applied for has been made, subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by him. All bids must be sealed and addressed to the Director of Forestry and must have enclosed therewith cash or certified check, Treasury Warrant, or post-office money order payable to the order of the Director of Forestry, for a sum equivalent to the rental for at least, the first three months of the lease. No bid shall be considered in which the proposed annual rental is less than three per centum of the appraised or re-appraised value of the land and one per centum of that of the improvements thereon, if any, in conformity with section seven of this Act.

SEC. 10. Upon the final expiration of the lease or permit all immovable and other permanent improvements made by the lessee, his heirs, executors, administrators, successors, or assigns shall be-

The Market...

(Continued from next page)

exportation of 41 items to other countries except to continental United States of America. At its first publication in local news, copra and hemp were not included. Two days later, these two items were included barred from exportation to foreign countries except to the U. S.

Business speculated on the idea that perhaps some "Big Man" complained to the President why copra and hemp were not included and immediately the President included these two items.

In some business group, its components argued that perhaps the President's hand are tied because so far the ₱800,000,000 loan for Government use to keep it going, is still pending in Congress. The President, for diplomacy and tact, would not want anything to pass that may jeopardize the granting of that loan to the young Philippine Republic. And he is right at that. But the question arises, if we export, say hemp and copra alone, to foreign markets except the continental U. S., would the government not make more money than ₱800,000,000 to keep the government running, with other markets like Central and South Americas, and China offering us prices at least double what U. S. pays for copra and hemp? It is simple arithmetic.

Or perhaps, the present world situation has a bigger meaning to the Phil-

come the property of the Government.

SEC. 11. Any person or association of persons occupying or using any part of the public domain for grazing purposes without lease or permit in violation of the provisions of this Act or of any rules or regulations promulgated thereunder shall be liable to the payment of twice the regular rental charges now or hereafter provided for by regulations during such time that the area is illegally used or occupied. For failure to pay the rental charges due within thirty days after they had become due and payable, the respondent shall be penalized by an additional charge of fifty per centum of such rental charges.

SEC. 12. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved, June 8, 1939.

Revolution In The...

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His yield will be some 25 bushels per acre more than that of his neighbor—or enough to bring him an additional income of \$900.

Scores of other advantages offered by hybrid corn are less apparent but even more important in the long run. For example the University of Illinois has produced strains containing twice as much protein and three times as much oil as ordinary corn. Other strains especially rich in certain elements have enormously speeded up the mass production of penicillin, of which corn steep liquor—a by product of starch making—is an essential ingredient.

Ten years ago, less than half of one per cent of the corn planted in Illinois was hybrid. This year 98 per cent of Illinois corn will come from hybrid seed; in Iowa, just under 100 per cent.

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The Problem...

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Naturally it was passionate and often unreasonable. Life of cruelty and injustice and intrigue during the Japanese time twisted many a Filipino virtue of hospitality, timidity, tolerance and liberality. Suppressed bad traits came to the fore instead.

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ippine-U. S. relationship-protectionism than the monetary gain the Philippines will make exporting to foreign markets for the quicker rehabilitation of our country? There is something serious really in this question.

True, our copra and hemp bought at much higher prices than what U. S. pays for them may go to places where we don't want them to go and may be used for purposes that might be harmful to the U. S. and the Philippines later on?

But there is news too that the Chinese nationals buy plenty of U. S. goods and sell them to Communists at fabulous profits. But that is only "news"—we have no proofs.

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