

Philippine Education In The Midst Of A Crisis

By **ANTONIO JAVIER**

(Address Delivered on the Occasion of the Installation of Officers of Batangas Lodge No. 35, last January 18, 1964)

It is said and quite correctly, that education is everybody's business, for which reason, the problems of education are everybody's concern -- yours and mine. But I dare say without fear of contradiction that this incontrovertible fact is not as yet fully realized by all our people, so much so, that all shortcomings of education in this country are invariably or almost always attributed to the teacher's incompetence. The truth of the matter, however, is that there are four main agencies involved in the education of our children and youth; namely: the school, the home or the parents, the church, and the community. Considering the fact that the child stays only an average of five hours a day in school and the rest of the twenty-four hours in the home and community, it can be readily seen that the home and the community play a major role in shaping the future of the child. It has been deplored in many quarters that the standards of instruction in both our public and private schools are a far cry from what they were before the war. It has been claimed, for instance, that the products of the present system are half-baked, so to speak, that even some of our high school graduates are semi-literates, and that some of our colleges and universities are diploma mills. In other words, it has been alleged that there has been a deterioration of the quality of instruction in both our public and our private schools, colleges, and universities.

I am not taking the cudgels in defense of our present educational system, although ordinarily it is my duty to do so. As a matter of fact, education authorities, from top to bottom, generally admit that the quality of instruction after the liberation has gone down below the pre-war standards. Unfortunately, however, the same critics have not fully realized the equally valid fact that this situation has been brought about by causes beyond the control of the system itself. To cite just a few of the major causes of our educational shortcomings, we have had the following: (a) the abolition of grade seven; (b) the adoption of the double single-session plan; (c) the dearth of school books and supplies; (d) inadequate housing and equipment facilities; (e) the employment of hardly qualified teachers during the period immediately following the liberation; and (f) the lack of interest if not the apathy of most parents to collaborate with the school authorities in the education of their children. To these may be added the fact that extension classes have been organized much faster than the government can provide them adequate housing and equipment facilities. In short, due to lack of funds, so it is said, we have resorted to quantity at the sacrifice of quality

in education. In this connection, I wish to recall a very critical issue raised by the late Mr. Venancio Trinidad, former Director of Public Schools and once a ranking member of this great fraternity, and the issue is, "Should it be quantity or quality in education?"

The second big problem of education in this country, which has been mainly responsible for the unsatisfactory conditions generally obtaining in most of our schools is the problem of inadequate and unstable financing. While it is true that education receives the lion share of our national appropriations, the annual increase in such appropriations for the public schools is so disproportionate to the tremendous increase in school population as to create the deteriorating situation I have just pointed out; viz., lack of books, inadequate housing and equipment facilities, etc. It must be mentioned in passing that according to the statistics of the United Nations Organization, of all countries in the world today, the Philippines has registered the highest percentage of population increase, which can only mean that we Filipinos have become the most prolific people in this corner of the earth. This population explosion has posed as one of our most pressing problems of education.

In our efforts to meet the problems of inadequate and unstable school financing, the Department of Education, the Philippine Association of School Superintendents, the Philippine Public School Teachers Association, the Parent-Teacher Associations and other civic organizations sympathetic to the cause of education have joined efforts to press the passage of the so-called "Public School Financing and Stabilization Bill". If this Bill had only become a law, the problem of school financing and all its ramifications would have been perhaps solved, at least for the time being. But Congress, maybe for reasons of political expediency — this Financing and Stabilization Bill being a tax measure — has continuously shelved this proposed legislation. It has continued to ignore this proposed measure in spite of the fact that 95% of our people, in a plebiscite conducted in 1948, had unequivocally expressed their desire to pay additional taxes solely for the support of education. I believe we should continue to mobilize our forces to the end that that through the inculcation of more educational statesmanship among our legislators, and for that matter, among the forces of the administration, this perennial problem of school financing can be solved once and for all.

A third vital problem of education in this country today is how to make our schools more responsive to the people's needs — to make the schools a more effective agency for the improvement of community living in all its varied aspects, as economic security, health, peace and order, moral-spiritual life and socio-cultural and recreational activities. The increasing incidence of unemployment in this country is perhaps a symptom of our educational shortcomings, although unemployment is the result of many other more direct causes. In European countries notably England, France, Russia, and the little democracies of Switzerland, Belgium, and Holland, not to mention the United States, where unemployment also exists although to a much lesser degree than in the Philippines, the government is investing more and more in education because the people believe that economic and industrial progress can be attained only where technical and technological knowledge is advanced, and this is possible only where people are given the best kind

of education consistent with their needs and aspirations. My humble observations of the educational systems of England and France and my study of the other educational systems in other countries, as in Russia, United States, Japan, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland and the Scandinavian Countries clearly indicate the trend towards more and more emphasis in technical and vocational education. The new industrial revolution now taking place in these countries is undoubtedly a motivating factor of this emphasis on technological courses in the school curriculum, or it may be the other way around — that the new industrial revolution is being brought about by the emphasis being given to technical and technological courses in the curriculum. While we in the Philippines are still grappling with the problem of putting up new and infant industries and trying to produce more rice and other staple crops just to meet the bare necessities of life, people in the more advanced countries, I have just mentioned, are already preparing for the age of automation, which is expected about a quarter century from now, the age when industry will be about so completely mechanized that no more laborers will be needed and only more technicians and technologists will be all that will be necessary to control the machines.

A fourth major problem of Philippine education which should perhaps be a local point of emphasis is national character building. The need for moral regeneration of our people is felt never so strongly than now, moral regeneration that will embrace the recapturing of our time-honored virtues as a people — the virtues of honor and integrity, honesty, patriotism, family solidarity, our traditional hospitality, the bayanihan spirit, etc. Our people must be saved from the increasing danger of juvenile and even adult delinquency, from the growing tendency towards graft and corruption, towards the blind imitation of ultra-modern civilization which tends to undermine our own native culture and threatens to banish to oblivion our identity as an independent nation — a nation distinct with a colorful history every Filipino can be proud of. The annals of our country are replete with feats of valor, bravery and self-sacrifice of the Filipino in the field of battle and in a silent revolution through the power of the pen and in the field of propaganda. From the shores of Mactan to the rocks of Corregidor now consecrated by the blood of our martyrs who died in the night, the Filipino soldier had demonstrated to the world his undying love for freedom and his willingness to sacrifice his life for the sake of that freedom. Our history likewise records the fine and incorruptible virtues of Filipino manhood and womanhood in the days of Rizal and Maria Clara. Certainly we have a beautiful and noble tradition and a distinct culture of our own which we owe posterity to preserve.

At this juncture, I recall a statement of policy made by our beloved Secretary of Education, the Honorable Alejandro Roces, in his speech delivered at the Central Luzon Agricultural College, last year, in which he stressed the need for propagating cultural nationalism. I hope that the slogan "Filipino First" will find substance and functional application under this administration which is dedicated to the policy of Filipinism, of moral regeneration, and of giving our people a greater measure of social justice. As a powerful in-

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Editor

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strumentality of this administration, the Department of Education, our schools, have a major role to play. We are pledged to play this important role.

Distinguished officers and members of this fraternity, I have pictured to you what I honestly believe is a crisis in Philippine education. This is everybody's concern

THANK YOU.



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