

Civil Defense and the Business Community

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MUCH has recently been said, in the press, at meetings, and over the radio about "civil defense". The comparative newness of this activity, and its intensiveness, have caused some persons to interpret it as a "war scare"; unnecessarily alarming of the populace.

The probable cause is that some civil defense speakers have dwelt on such subjects as the atom bomb, the hydrogen bomb, et al, possibly for publicity value. Another contributory cause is that a co-equal phase of the entire campaign has been seldom mentioned, that of Disaster Organization to cope with emergencies like typhoons, earthquakes, fires, and floods. In fact, it is this latter phase in which the Philippine Safety Council is primarily interested.

A most natural question for members of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines is, "Where does my firm come in?" Some obvious questions immediately present themselves, like, "Will martial law be declared?", "Will my facilities be confiscated or taken over?", "What degree of control will I retain over my business?", "What can I do now which is not overly expensive or impracticable?", "Should I build bomb shelters and hold drills?", "What items of supply should I stock up?" and "Just what is expected of my firm in the way of contributing supplies, vehicles, personnel, etc. in case of emergency?"

All of the foregoing questions cannot of course be answered in advance. The nature of the emergency will determine the degree of government control, if any, to be applied. Undoubtedly certain Executive Orders (some now being prepared) will become effective in time of emergency. Example: Price Control. The geography of the emergency will be important, with possibly different situations prevailing in different locations. One thing, however, is absolutely certain,—the better prepared we are for emergency, the less we will be inconvenienced when it comes.

Now as to industrial, utility, transportation, communication, and commercial firms participation: Your firm will probably have two problems to consider: (1) Protection of your own property and personnel, and (2) Your pro-rata contribution to the defense or emergency effort. The first thing, therefore, is to make these two elements jibe in a fair and practical manner.

Taking the first factor, protection, it can be said that plans are now being made for the most efficient methods to be applied, both generally and specifically. There is no intention to ram a group of regulations down the throats of businessmen. In fact, questionnaires are now in the mail asking for businessmen in various categories to serve on planning committees. In this way, your ideas will be taken into consideration at ground-level. Bear in mind, the entire Civil Defense and Disaster Organization program is largely a civilian effort, not a government monopoly.

Factor two: your contribution to the emergency control, is another matter. Vehicles which you will not need, certain technical personnel, possibly even some equipment or buildings may have to be used in the common interest. Even so, you are again being invited to participate in the planning, and committees are now being formed. If you do not participate at this point, you will have small ground for complaint later.

Current planning is now going on at two levels, national and local. The national is largely concerned with overall plans, creation of local chapters, development of nationwide interest and support, and administrative factors. Implementation comes mainly on the local level. An organization chart has been prepared showing the best method of operating city and provincial civil-defense groups in a coordinated manner. It is stressed that everything is still in the preliminary stage and that non-governmental elements will soon be invited to participate.

The Philippine Safety Council has been assigned several responsibilities, among them the formation of civilian businessman committees in the (1) Industrial and Commercial Firms Protection, (2) Communications, (3) Transportation, and (4) Utilities sections. You will, by the time of publication of this article, have received information and questionnaires. No doubt many businessmen will be able to contribute valuable experience and suggestions, and to assist in keeping the plans on a sane and practical basis.

In conclusion, we ask you to again recall that this entire effort is for peace as well as for war. The preparation of plans to cope with disasters, is certainly as important as that for defense in a war we hope will never come. The cooperation of business leaders is earnestly solicited.

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the businessman and, more generally, to
promote the economic interests
of the Philippines