

## Schools Take a Look at Farming

This excerpt from a general economic survey report is the work of a committee headed by Gilbert S. Perez, head of vocational education in the education bureau, who, incidentally, contributes to the JOURNAL. What is published here will illustrate the general excellence of the report, now current in pamphlet form and obtainable from the education bureau. Mr. Perez but recently left Manila to visit Europe and the Americas and observe the progress of vocational education in the temperate and tropic zones. He is one of the oldtimers in the civil service whose work is highly commendable. What is here published is the work of the subcommittee of which Dr. Toribio Vibar is chairman and José Camus, Faustino Reyes, and Ludovico Hidrosollo are members, Camus being assistant director of the agriculture bureau, Reyes head of the public lands division of the lands bureau, and Hidrosollo director of the nonchristian tribes bureau.—Ed.

Your committee considers the settlement of the public domain as the most vital factor in the economic development of the Philippines. Of our total area of 29,629,600 hectares of land, only 3,712,712 hectares were under cultivation in 1926 according to statistics issued by the Bureau of Commerce and Industry in 1927. It can be stated without fear of successful contradiction that 10,000,000 hectares of the 25,906,888 hectares of uncultivated land are potentially agricultural and subject to settlement. No factor can increase the taxable wealth of the Philippines more than making the agricultural portions of the public domain productive. From these figures it is evident that a large part

of the Philippines is at present uncultivated. There are thousands of hectares of virgin land available for agriculture, but, unfortunately a large part of this area is not at present available for profitable agriculture. By profitable agriculture is meant not only the growing of agricultural products, but also the possibilities of cultivating the crop at such a cost, and of selling the produce at such a price, as to make it a profitable undertaking to the farmer and his dependents.

The committee has found that the reason these large areas are not occupied is not because of the lack of a desire of the people to go to the farms, but because of the absence of roads and means of communications which will make it easy for the settler to go from place to place and for him to sell his products after he has settled. Large tracts of virgin land are available, but most of this land is not connected with the

markets by good roads. Thus it does not matter how efficient a farmer may be or how diligently he may apply himself to his work it is an impossibility for him to market his crop. The building of a road or of highways through a fertile unsettled section of a country has invariably been followed by a rush of settlers to that section of the country. The establishment of steamship lines to small settlements usually results in an increase in the number of settlers in that section, and a consequent decrease in the amount of good land open to homesteading. The extension of the railroad to the Bicol regions, the opening up of the interprovincial highways in Mindanao, and a road connecting the two coasts of Mindoro will do more to reduce the area of idle land in the Philippines than any system of education, or any campaign of propaganda for the purpose of attracting more people to the farm.

It should be noted that whenever conditions are favorable for settlement, the land is immediately taken up. Along the coast of Min-

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danao where there is no malaria and where the lanes of the sea may be used to carry the products to the market, land which was vacant four years ago has already been taken up and new settlers and small investors in farm lands have to return home disappointed, to wait for the opening of roads to the interior. Members of the committee who have gone to Mindanao have found that the number of settlers going to that region would be a revelation to those who believe that it will take more than a century to develop that large island.

Some sections of Mindanao which are ideal locations in terms of soil fertility are so badly affected with malaria that the establishing of colonies without a thorough medical survey will be little less than criminal. One plantation colony in a section of this kind in northern Mindanao is making heroic efforts to survive. Pounds of quinine are consumed daily by the managers and the workers, but this measure is purely palliative. Without governmental aid in the form of more efficient sanitary and medical force, the death toll will be too high a price to pay for the settlement of that particular region, in spite of its wonderful possibilities from a purely agricultural standpoint.

The fact that in this place and in other similar

fever-stricken sections, we find pioneers who are risking their lives, their meagre capital, and the lives and happiness of their families, is a proof that there is not as much of a disinclination towards the farm as some would have us believe.

From the data gathered, it may be stated that the younger generation is not averse to life on the farm, nor are they unmindful of the need of the economic development of the country; but they are conservative about rushing into an unsettled portion of the country without capital, far away from friends and home and medical attendance, and exposed to malaria and other diseases which are common in all newly opened up tracts of land. It may be interesting to note in this connection that the percentage of young men failing as independent farmers is considerably lower than the number failing in the business and commercial fields. Perhaps this very conservatism is more of a proof of wisdom than an indication of inherent indolence or lack of enterprise. They evidently prefer to work at some other jobs until their financial condition is such that they are practically sure of making a success in farming.

The committee also found that the conditions for marketing the products of the farm or the cattle ranch are far from being satisfactory.

There is a great need for an organization for marketing. The tobacco producers are not bothered by their lack of knowledge of marketing, but rather by the lack of organization for marketing. Where there is an organization as is the case of sugar and copra, there is a high return for the labor and capital expended and a continued progress and development. These facts are stated because it is believed that conditions should be considered not as they should be but as they actually are.

In the Philippines, capital costs from 50 to 100 per cent, while in the United States the rate of interest ranges from 5 to 6 per cent. Due to the lack of capital in the Philippines, the little capital that is available is more exacting, expects larger returns from its investment, and consequently is reluctant to increase the present wage scale. However, as the competition with countries which employ higher grades of labor increases, local capital will find that it can compete effectively with capital of other countries only by employing a higher class of better remunerated, more skilled, and more contented laborers. When the cost of capital approximates that of the United States, there will be no dearth of applicants for unsettled regions of Mindanao and Mindoro.

No people have a greater desire to own land than the Filipinos, and the only things that keep them from getting the land are the lack of capital, the lack of transportation which will take them to the land and which will enable them to take their products to the market, and the lack of organization for marketing farm products. When capital is available at a low rate of interest, a system of good roads is expanded, and the facilities for marketing farm products are increased, unsettled areas of fertile land will be a thing of the past.

There are at present under the Bureau of Education fourteen agricultural schools (secondary), sixteen farm schools (secondary), two farm schools (elementary), and 277 settlement farm schools (elementary). The objectives of these schools, which were organized for the occupational needs of the country, are essentially vocational. Although there may be some countries where it is possible to find better technical agricultural schools, there is no school organization which has given more attention to a system of schools where the instruction includes actual job experiences under conditions as near as possible to those which the students will meet in actual life. Of the agricultural secondary, farm secondary and farm schools (elementary), 6 were opened in 1907 to 1910; 7 in 1911 to 1915; 11 in 1916 to 1920; 4 in 1921 to 1925; and 3 in 1926 to 1928. From these figures, it will be seen that the Bureau of Education has been opening agricultural schools at the rate of one a year since 1907. This rate is quite commendable considering the financial support given to the Bureau for agricultural-education work.

Considerable efforts have been made to make the agricultural high schools as practical as possible. The first part of the school life of an agricultural high-school student is spent in communal enterprises, but during the last two years of the course, the student farmer leaves the school dormitory, lives on a miniature farm, cultivates his own home garden, raises his own pigs and chickens, brings his major field crop to the school granary, and receives from the school bank his share of the products. If he does not own the carabao, he has to deduct from his profit, the amount that in real life would be the rental of the work animals. In other words, he is made to feel that he is not only a student, but also a farmer with a farmer's responsibilities and a farmer's viewpoint.

The Central Luzon Agricultural School, the Bukidnon Agricultural School, the Lagangilang Agricultural School and other large secondary agricultural schools are destined to be the safety-valve of our community morale. Day by day we find among the young people of the country a growing spirit of unrest. The clerical positions formerly easily secured by high-school graduates are now growing more and more difficult to obtain. But this situation will gradually solve itself. Slowly, but surely, will come the realization that schools like the Central Luzon Agricultural School are the schools which will enable a graduate to find in his rice fields and coconut groves that financial independence which he formerly believed to be possible only in a lawyer's office or at a doctor's desk.

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