

# OUR SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAM

By ASUNCION A. PEREZ

**S**OCIAL welfare in the Philippines has its beginning in an organized charity work as early as the 16th century when the Spaniards came and established churches and convents. These churches and convents drew financial support from pious individuals who were encouraged to give for the unfortunate as a religious duty. Organized social work in this country was established only with the inception of the American regime at the turn of the century.

At that time many private welfare agencies were established, among the American Red Cross chapter (1905), the Gota de Leche (1907), Boy Scouts of America (1910), the Philippine Anti-Tuberculosis Society (1910), Young Men's Christian Association (1911) and the Asociacion de Damas Filipinas (1915), but it was the church and private individuals who continued to give material assistance to the needy.

In 1917, the Associated Charities of Manila was established under the leadership of American residents in the city and for the first time an organized attempt was made to rally the whole community behind a program of assistance to the needy.

In the meantime, the government created in 1915 a public welfare board to study, supervise and coordinate the efforts of all government agencies and private organizations interested in social welfare. The only government entity engaged in social welfare work then (1917) was the government orphanage which is known as the Welfareville Institutions, now a part of the social welfare administration.

The government granted subsidies early as 1922 to the Associated Charities of the Philippines for assistance purposes and between 1934 and 1938 was established a national unemployment commission which, in 1940, was reorganized into a national security administration and an agency directed mainly toward the solution of unemployment.

The government assumed for the first time its responsibility for public welfare when it formally took over the Associated Charities of Manila on May 31, 1941 to form the nucleus of the public assistance service of the bureau of public welfare. The state had at last recognized its obligation to provide the individual with the minimum basic needs.

On Dec. 8, 1941, the Pacific War broke out.

The war years temporarily set back the government's program for public welfare but after liberation the trend in social welfare has been for the state to assume more and more the burden for a long-range welfare program by creating the social welfare commission (1947) to replace the former bureau of public welfare, the war relief office (1946) for the relief and rehabilitation of indigent war victims, and the President's Action Committee on Social Amelioration (P.A.C.S.A., 1948) to ameliorate the living conditions of the people living in the rural areas, particularly the tenants and landless farmers. On January 3, 1951, all these agencies were integrated into what is now known as the social welfare administration.

Geared to public welfare is the expansion of activities from the urban to the rural. During the last five years, the national social welfare policy has been to develop social welfare services in rural areas, done

through establishment of branch offices in almost all provinces in the Philippines and the launching of a comprehensive rural welfare program in connection with land settlements. Previously, public welfare seemed to have focused its assistance program on the individual. Today, such activity is viewed from the community angle and more and more emphasis is toward total improvement of community living.

While the tendency of the government is to meet the physical needs of the individual, voluntary social welfare agencies like the Philippine National Red Cross, Girl and Boy Scouts of the Philippines, the Young Men and Women's Christian Associations, the National Federation of the Catholic Women's League and other private institutions and civic organizations tend to concentrate their efforts on meeting the spiritual and mental needs of the people. Special efforts are made to provide the less fortunate with social amenities of life such as social and recreational activities which are a neces-

sary part of enriched living. The emphasis has been on social welfare activities of preventive nature.

To complete the picture of contemporary social work in the country, mention here is made of the organization in 1949 of the Community Chest and of the Council of Welfare Agencies.

In both government and private social welfare activities, a wider scope is given to citizen participation. The use of voluntary services in public welfare is now more and more accepted and community organization as a method in public administration is becoming more and more popular. A concrete step in this regard was taken in 1949 with the organization of the Community Chest of Greater Manila and the Council of Welfare Agencies.

Today we are keenly aware of the need to develop new community resources to meet the people's increased social needs. Social workers therefore do not only participate but actually assume leadership in community social planning and social action in order to attain a social structure within which such social needs shall be remedied, reduced or eliminated.

The social welfare program in the Philippines, just as it is in any other country, is dependent in its progress on social legislation which forms the legal basis of such services. In this field, as in any other field of social welfare, the Philippines has made strides which are definitely progressive.

Social measures providing for the establishment and maintenance of provincial hospitals for children, maternity clinics, the purchase and apportionment of the estates to the public, the payment of backpay to government officials and employees, the G.I. Bill of Rights, and the reopening of public schools in rural districts have contributed to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of war damage in the Philippines.

The Philippine government, to implement these laws, has also approved corresponding appropriation of funds and created offices and appointed commissions on committees for the supervision and enforcement of such measures. However limited appropriation of funds might be, it still is a manifestation of an accept-

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ance on the part of the government of its responsibility to its people.

Considered one of the many progressive social legislations during the last five years are amendments introduced in the civil code of the Philippines which guaranty the betterment of women's rights in general and those pertaining to women and children in particular. By the civil code, the legal rights of women have been extended and amplified and the rights of children have been properly protected.

To improve the standards of living among the laboring classes, such social legislations like the minimum wage law, the creation of the placement and industrial safety bureaus, and the establishment of the court of industrial relations are outstanding. Proposed social legislations include an act providing for the retirement of officials and employees of the Philippine government, and act providing insurance for and public assistance to the needy, an act to establish a section for the welfare of the deaf and blind, and an act to create a body to handle juvenile and domestic relationships.

With the broadening of welfare fields, social work is now recognized as a profession in the Philippines. Local social work education is in its infancy. But as far back as the period immediately before the war, distinguished welfare leaders in the country had tried vainly to secure recognition of the need for trained social workers. It took World War II and the great changes it wrought to make the people realize the importance of organized social welfare and the need for professionally trained workers to render efficient service to the public.

Formal training for social workers started during the Japanese occupation in 1942 when the bureau of public welfare conducted a series of in-service training courses for new workers in order to meet the unprecedented demand for social workers. These training courses proved to be the beginning of a keen understanding of social welfare work on the part of the people.

In 1946, 1947 and 1948, more institutes on social work and social case work were conducted by the U. N. consultants on social affairs. At the same time the U. N. financed the sending abroad of distinguished social workers on a six-month fellowship each to study and observe the latest trends in social welfare work. While these institutes, seminars, conferences and fellowships have contri-

buted much to the progress of social welfare in the Philippines, the country has also contributed to international social work by lending one of its more distinguished social workers to serve as a consultant on child welfare in the Far Eastern region and through participation of social workers in conferences, institutes and seminars along similar lines abroad.

To date there are about 13 graduate social workers who had taken up professional studies in social work abroad. Only last June 3, the Philippine Women's University conferred the degree of master of arts in social administration on 17 social workers who had successfully completed the first year of the graduate course in social work. This educational institution and the Centro Escolar University expect to turn out the first local graduates in professional social work.

The Ateneo de Manila, the Santa Theresa's College and the University of the Philippines are offering graduate as well as undergraduate courses on social work. It is earnestly hoped that this impetus given social work education shall greatly help in the further progress of social welfare work in the Philippines.

## Crusade For Freedom

NEW YORK—A campaign is underway to inaugurate independent broadcasts to the Far East under sponsorship of the recently organized National Committee For A Free Asia.

Objectives of such a program will parallel those of Radio Free Europe, which are to combat communist propaganda, expose quislings and informers behind the iron curtain, undermine Red puppet regimes and encourage prisoner peoples in their hopes for ultimate liberation from slavery.

The Crusade for Freedom is planning a campaign into help finance Radio Free Europe and the comparable operation for the Far East, the Far East project will be directed by the National Committee For A Free Asia.

The Crusade for Freedom proposes to enroll 25 million Americans and raise \$3,500,000 in voluntary contributions for the projects.

Chairman for the Crusade for Freedom is Gen. Lucius D. Clay, who formed it last fall when a campaign was climaxed with the dedication of the world freedom bell in Berlin on United Nations Day, October 24.