

Sixty-two Oldtime American Teachers' Pensions Cut

Their association protests the Commonwealth's action, that contrasts with America's continuation of Filipinos' pensions summing more than \$2,000,000 a year

Sixty-two American teachers retired from the Philippine civil service under the teachers' pension act of 1922 have banded themselves into an association for common action and are making appeals to officials at Washington, and members of Congress, holding that abrogation of the pension act by the Philippine Commonwealth was a breach of contract as well as an injustice. At the same time, one of the Filipino teachers similarly treated, who number thousands, has a case pending in the Philippine supreme court. She hopes for a favorable decision; failing it she plans to appeal to the United States supreme court on grounds that a constitutional point is involved.

Under the Tydings-McDuffie act, the commonwealth assumed the obligations of the government in the Philippines under the Autonomy Act of 1916, from which it took over the Islands' administration. Pensions being paid to teachers under the pension law of 1922 were among those obligations.

When they first voiced their protest, less than a year ago, the American teachers retired on pension numbered sixty-seven; since then five have died, and the living frankly invite attention to the brief period, in all probability, that many of the pensions would have had to be paid had the law been let stand.

When the law was changed at President Quezon's instance, the teachers' pension fund summed P21,000,000 and not a centavo of the principal had ever been touched; contingent liabilities loomed large ahead, and this motivated President Quezon, but the teachers assert that repeal was an unnecessary step—the fund could have been kept valid by moderate annual appropriations, when time demanded them, and the contract with the teachers could have been kept.

The fund has now been dispersed in part, in part merged into the funds of the general insurance plan instituted by the Commonwealth—this plan embracing army retirement arrangements.

The sixty-two American teachers retired from the service prior to the date this new legislation took effect. Some of them elected the pension when they might have retired under the provisions of the American Gratuity Act, whose benefits were generally discounted and taken in a lump sum. (Others retired before this act was passed). A teacher who availed himself of the gratuity, as many did, cleared up with the government in one transaction; what he got is his, the Commonwealth asks him to pay nothing back. In contrast, the Commonwealth has cut the pensions 2% a year for each year or fractional year they have been in force; it has cut the oldest of them 30%, and one of the latest, 4%, counting even a few weeks more than a year as a full year for discounting purposes.

The pensioners ask if it is right, equitable, to take from them and not from the gratuity-beneficiary; he and they alike were retired under the most formal provisions of Philippine law. These laws were the work of the government, contracts, the

teachers hold, whose terms they accepted.

The teachers say further that the assurance of the pension for their declining years was an incentive that held many of them in the service when they were offered employment outside. The *Journal* knows this to be true; the sixty-two teachers were a devoted band of able men and women, to whom, and to their conferees, the real debt of the Philippines and the United States can never be repaid—it simply does not measure in money. The *Journal* also knows that upon some of the sixty-two, the reduction of their pensions works extreme hardship. Many of them were superintendents with the schools of whole provinces under their administration, others were high-school principals, and some were on yet higher

detail at the general offices of the educational bureau.

The Commonwealth now inquires into their income outside their pension, since the new law authorizes its administrators to suppress the pensions altogether. The teachers think this gives their pension, esteemed by them a portion of their well-earned remuneration, a sort of dole. It rouses their resentment, and more especially because the gratuity-beneficiaries escape it—discrimination rises in the law between the teacher taking his retired pay in form of the pension and his colleague who elected the gratuity, something those who chose the pension think is highly unfair and unwarrantably humiliating. It is more so in the cases of all those teachers retired under the pension act before the gratuity act was passed. They had no choice.

Such pensioners are an old man and his wife who, when the man's health gave out utterly a few years ago, returned to their home state in the Middle West. He had invalidated himself in the service here; he can't

work now and never will be able to earn another dollar. That family needs its pension, but the cut has come just the same, 2% for each year the pension has been running.

Another case is that of a teacher who left the Islands and settled in California on a small farm, his main objective being the recovery of his health in outdoor surroundings and the toil of an orchardist. The farm, of course, labored under a mortgage. Under the effort to lift this, during the depression, the man's wife died. His own health shattered, the man lives on—dependent wholly upon his pension, now greatly reduced. This pension is not at all the pension that figured in the bargain, as he renewed, from time to time, his contract with the educational bureau; it is something different, less adequate, that may be cut off completely.

Though few will believe that the Commonwealth would ever go so far as actually to suppress a pension in full, such is the misgiving under which every one of the teachers, American and Filipino alike, must live so long as the law continues to carry this *threat clause*, as the sixty-two teachers style it. Another teacher retired to California supports an invalid

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The American Teacher

The American teacher in the Philippines was the primary founder of the American institutions here that touched into being the Philippine middle class without which the Islands' democracy could not have been born, could not persist. It was the teaching family, settling down to work in the provinces, who established here that epitome of democracy, the middle-class home with its attention to the kitchen and the library.

Not religious temples, not rich palaces, but communities of these homes of thrifty, fairly well educated folk are America's mark upon the Islands; and the teachers, in particular, made that mark. Their influence tends to make it enduring.

It is regrettable that the Commonwealth's relations with the American teacher may end on a sour note. The bitterness of Filipino teachers over loss of their hard-earned pensions is, if anything, even more regrettable. Teachers' salaries are low, these pensions were all counted upon to supplement the meager savings the teachers could manage while maintaining their standard of living. Yet to maintain this standard of living has been as much their duty as their actual work in the schoolroom.

Give Us This Day...

Continuous trouble in Nueva Ecija over title and treatment reflects the fact that the agrarian conflicts have not yet been solved. The great majority of laborers in the Philippines are busy raising the staple rice and agricultural export crops. With increasing literacy, more cines, well-stocked tiendas, to invite spending, the peasantry ask a larger share in the product of their toil.

According to the recently-promulgated Philippine tenancy law, in the absence of a written contract between landlord and tenant, the declaration of the latter shall be given greater weight. This is, of course, gentle persuasion of the hacendados so that another reaping will not bring a new crop of troubles. For there are enough already.

Title to small holdings presents the greatest difficulty. In its attempt to be just, the court must traditionally accept the written document as better evidence than the spoken word. If the records do not fairly present the picture, legitimate claims may suffer. A compensation offer to those who find they do not have legal title to their landholding is that of transplanting to Mindanao with government assistance. Naturally, this some peasants are loath to accept. The land they work is to them their home.

To tenant laborers, on the other hand, the crop is of first importance. Well-known is the predicament of the laborers in the season of scarcity. Then they mortgage their future returns so that they may have subsistence until the harvest. The report of the Bureau of Labor lists the causes of most tenant conflicts as



Advances

Farm expenses

Rent

Eviction

Compensation for improvements made

Irrigation charges

Lowering of prices by landowners

Use of a larger measure when tenants pay

Refusal to liquidate tenants' shares

Unwritten contracts.

Since the Philippines is largely agricultural, peace among the peasants is fundamental to the national concord. If tenants are seriously dissatisfied, their discontent might grow so much that actual danger to lives and property would follow. A wise paternalism has been shown by some landlords, and the results have more than justified their departure from the more customary treatment accorded tenants.

Government remedies vary with the particular causes of conflict. Best are those without compulsion, such as conciliation and mediation. Here the really peaceful temperament of the people serves as a rock on which agreement can be built.

Arbitration presupposes authority to make settlement on the part of the arbiter. Public opinion enters into the enforcement of any solution so reached.

The principle of collective bargaining is advocated by labor

leaders. This can readily be an educative means of explaining the fundamental problems to tenantry at large.

The basic causes have been attacked from many angles, by means of rural credit associations, the homestead act, usury legislation, cooperative marketing associations, the purchase of friar lands. Problems of administration seem to have handicapped such measures so that their full effect has not yet been seen. Only when the vast number of laborers have confidence in the helpfulness of disinterested officials, will the conflicts begin to subside. And subside they must, not only for the good of the peasantry, but as well for the peace of the land.

An ingrained evil of centuries does not disappear at the wave of the hand. When the agrarian problem is finally solved, the honors will be to many unnamed cogs in the machinery. Their contacts with the sons of the soil are the true means to the goal of just treatment. What years this process may take will require the utmost patience and persistence. For instance, the parceling of purchased friar lands has been going on since early American days. Commonwealth Act No. 32 governs disposition of such lands, with a corollary law of the National Assembly appropriating P75,000 for its administration. Preferential right of purchase is given to bona fide occupants, providing the holding is not more than 10 hectares. Such an occupant has 30 days, after receiving notice of the existence of his right, to make the 1st of 10 installment payments. Apparently coordination of government loans with these provisions furnishes a solution for a goodly number of such tenants.

The agrarian movement in the Philippines is, after all, a part of the world-wide discontent of working people under the existing economic order. The Scandinavian nations have demonstrated that an orderly and happy result can be secured, by adoption of a viewpoint that recognizes fully the modern situation. In Scandinavia ways have been found to enable young farmers to buy farms, livestock and equipment; and means for their education in the folk highschool, with courses suited to their vocation, have been provided, the consequence being that Scandinavian peasants have been redeemed from indenturedship to the landgraves and estates are breaking up into small holdings—with no social disturbances, no confiscations. In the folk schools and in their practical cooperatives, the peasants learn the advantages of mutual effort to attain a common goal, but it all stems from the steps the governments have taken in giving the peasants secure tenure of the land and terms on which they eventually gain title to their acreages.

The Philippines, so fortunate in that food and clothing need not be imported, has in her landlord-tenant situation no insurmountable problem. The road may be steep, but it can be climbed without undue injury to anyone along the way. The national spirit seems willing. This year may reveal whether the flesh is weak.

Sixty-two Oldtime American Teachers...

wife, and the two have nothing to live on but his pension—which must have been cut at least 20%.

The sixty-two American teachers propose no case in court to validate their claim that the pensions on which they were retired were earned remuneration and as such should be restored to them by the Commonwealth. Their method, apparently, is to enlighten Washington about the matter and reopen proceedings with the Commonwealth on the basis of just grievance. They insist that the \$65,000 their full pen-

sions involve would be no special burden to a treasury overflowing with P3,000,000 surplus, as the Commonwealth treasury is—as officially reported. But they have a still stronger point in the fact that no pension would probably be paid during many years; at the average age of the teachers, their expectation of life would be counted by life insurance companies as about eleven years.

Still more emphatic is the fact that the United States, though lacking a treasury balance and with countless unusual claims upon its resources, has not moved to reduce any Fil-

Growing Upland Rice in Western Negros

• *Described by Vicente V. Gamboa in The Sugar Cane Planter. Methods of cultivation are thorough*

Two practices prevail in Occidental Negros in the cultivation of upland rice; one, by administration, the other the well-known share-cropping system. I shall say nothing of the administration system. Under it, as everyone knows, the planter gets the whole crop except he is leasing the land; if he leases the land, the owner receives a percentage of the crop, and just what this percentage should be has not been determined in the central and northern part of Occidental Negros to which my observations are limited.

Under the share system the procedure is as follows: The landlord prepares the fields very carefully, plowing them two to three times, usually with gang-disc plows, and harrowing them an equal number of times, preferably with a disc harrow. The soil being thus thoroughly prepared, the share-cropper seeds it with seed provided by the landlord, 10 to 12 gantas to the hectare; the cropper plows out the rows and plants them, and takes all care of the crop until it has matured. This is all at the cropper's expense; the landlord furnishes the fertilizer, but the cropper applies it.

Harvesters are extra help, paid a portion of the crop. Less this pay in kind, it is the obligation of the cropper to warehouse all the rice cut in any one day. The day following, this rice is threshed. In this province, threshing is done by trampling; the crews that do this usually receive 1 cavan out of 15 of the threshed rice.

When the rice is threshed and the portion of the threshers is taken out, the rice is usually divided immediately between the landlord and the cropper—two thirds to the landlord and one third to the cropper. Impartial observations during four years have demonstrated that this division of the crop is eminently equitable, as will be seen in the following table based on production of 50 cavans of unhulled rice per hectare:

<i>Planter: Cost of Preparation</i>	
Two plowings with tractor	₱16.00
Two harrowings	4.00
Seed	0.40

Our Plight . . .

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Denmark, who has had to change her *modus vivendi* completely since 1870, puts a new feather in her cap when she reclothes 3% of her area with forest, to make a total of 9%.

Then the comparative productivity of forests. Why, the very minor products of ours would, if exploited, return more by themselves than all that may be gathered from a northern forest anywhere. In short, the more our actual lot is compared with that of other men in other climes, what may come upon us in 1938 or 1939, or eight years hence when the Commonwealth ends, seems entirely within the bounds of human endurance. Not that what is wrong and harmful should not be vigorously opposed, only that despair should not be countenanced. America will not see the Islands go under, the new High Commissioner says; and adds, economic independence first. This is something very different from, and infinitely better than, most of the proximate political horizons throughout the world.

Let us stop now. To go farther would make us feel absolutely smug.

Fertilizer	25.00
Total, per hectare	₱45.40
Two thirds of 50 cavans (33 cavans and 8-1/2 gantas) at ₱2.50 per cavan	₱83.35
Less planters' expenses, above	45.40
Gain	₱37.95
<i>Cropper: Cost of Seeding and Cultivating</i>	
Seeding	₱ 2.20
Weeding, etc.	6.00
Applying fertilizer	2.00
Cultivating, one time	2.40
Transportation	0.10
Total	₱12.70
One third of 50 cavans (16 cavans and 16-1/2 gantas) at ₱2.50 per cavan	₱41.65
Less expenses, above	12.70
Cropper's gain	₱28.95



The landlord's gain of ₱8 more than the cropper in every 50 cavans, taken as the harvest to be divided between them from each hectare after harvesters and threshers are paid, is justified, we think, by the greater capital the landlord risks and the greater loss he suffers when bad seasons affect the harvest. To the end that the yield respond to the effort exerted by the planter, whether lessee or owner, in the preparation of the soil, it is always stipulated that the cultivation, and the quantity of fertilizer and manner of its application, be under the direction and supervision of the planter.

The divers varieties of upland rice grown in Occidental Negros are of the first quality; very white, aromatic, and fine-tasting. They are popularly called *bisaya*. Being in demand, the price varies from ₱3.50 to ₱4.50 for the cavan of 44 kilograms, though as yet there is no general market for their sale to the public and sales are made among the rich families.

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pino pension and keeps paying on this account, mainly in the Philippines, more than \$2,000,000 a year:

Filipino Scouts, retired	\$900,000
Naval Personnel, Filipino, retired	587,958
Other enlisted Filipinos, U. S. N., retired in Hawaii and the United States	100,000
Filipinos retired from the U. S. civil service ..	550,000
Total per year from U. S. Treasury to Filipinos	\$2,137,958

So far as is known, the United States has never moved to evade these contractual obligations on any grounds whatever. She keeps paying them as a matter of course, and does not even move to pay them out of any taxes collected in the United States on Philippine products sold and taxable there; on the contrary, she keeps remitting these collections to the Philippine treasury, including the excise collections on Philippine cigars sold in the United States—which in a single year are several times the \$65,000 the Commonwealth would need yearly to keep the American teachers' pensions undisturbed.