



# Man, Like Atom, Can Make, Unmake Humanity

Senator JOSE P. LAUREL

**THIS IS THE ERA** of the atom. An extremely minute particle, it is a "veritable world of itself, a complex system whose components are in rapid orbital motion," much like the earth, the moon and the stars going around the sun in our solar system. Man, ever looking upward to heights symbolized by the vastness of the sky, has stumbled and found about him the greatness of the small. This is the age of little things — seemingly innocuous, unobtrusive but powerful, self-contained bodies. Thus, the tiny has assumed magnitude, the insignificant has turned important, nay, indispensable; society in the sudden awakening to the potentialities of the microscopic atom's force for good or evil, has taken a new, solicitous view of the individual. For man — the discoverer, harnesser, of the atom — himself can be likened to a thinking, sensitive atom, the nucleus that can make or unmake the social mass that is humanity.

Never static, in the course of his lifetime he revolves together with his fellowmen around his God and like the heavenly bodies that revolve around and draw strength and energy from the sun so does mankind draw vigor from the Creator and in their interrelationship influence one another. Hence, humanity has experienced varied social explosions which destroy,

create, destroy and create, all in accordance with the pattern of good or evil influence dominant in each particular time and place.

The process by which man assimilates influence that determines the conduct of his life is, we commonly, whilst not philosophically, call, education. It is a continuing course from the cradle to the grave. Although parents are primarily charged with the duty and responsibility to educate their children, the latter's formal schooling is received actually under professional teachers. From the grades to graduation from college — in the shaping of a worthy citizen — an average of fourteen years is spent under practising tutors; during which time almost half of everyday is for the observance of school hours and instructions. Clearly, then, teachers exert considerable influence in the upbringing of an individual. Since nations are composed of men and women, a nation can be as great only as the greatness of its citizens. To a great measure, therefore, our nation's destiny lies in the hands of our teachers. How competent are they?

Personally, I believe in the capacities of our people singularly and collectively. But under the present reign of one who calls himself a "barrio teacher from Vigan,"

instead of encouraging the free play of the individual capabilities of those in the teaching profession whose welfare normally should be his pet obsession, his administration has neglected them.

As a teacher, he now instructs by his acts the people on the art and science of totalitarianism, punctuated by swaggering around here and abroad to show off his power gained at the expenses of the people, in uncalled for shows of force to obstruct the course of justice, and the materialism of his totally comic economic mobilization scheme which to date has resulted merely in the development of real estate complete with lawns for garden parties, gaming tables, swimming pools, and cars surrounding palatial houses of a coterie of subalterns and members of his royal court. Sadly neglected is the plight of 87,000 public school teachers on whom depends the future of today's youth.

The impact of war on the sensibilities of our people has distorted in a large scale our appreciation of human values and virtues. To many, it appears that to amass wealth illicitly provided one is not caught is a tribute to one's ingenuity. To take advantage of a legal technicality to advance one's personal welfare even at the expense of many is interpreted not to be criminal even if it is sinful. A great many in public service and private life connive with and corrupt one another saying: "To hell with the morality of it; it is legal, so what?"

Only recently, another manifestation of our society's present day ills was exposed by the apprehension of purveyors of sex. Count

the many reported and unreported crimes, and one cannot help exclaiming "Where is this country going to?!" All these, at one time or another, have been blamed on our inadequate educational system. Maybe, but not quite enough.

There are those who would reintroduce the double session plan, the extension of elementary instruction to the seventh grade, and of a liberal pre-college course. All these are sound enough proposals, but what do they mean? Simply, to extend the number of hours a student has to stay in school on the premise that the longer one does the more education he is made to absorb. Yet, many of our age in our younger days could qualify to teach after finishing the elementary grades. Many among us, then, after elementary instruction, could read, write and speak better than high school graduates today, yet we spent less time under a school roof than the latter. Can it be then that the standard of our teachers and their methods are lower now than before? I do not believe so, for we have made much more progress since then.

As I see it, the underlying cause is the lack of enthusiasm among teachers today, especially those entrusted with the grades, because of the absence of proper incentives to allow them to put all their hearts and minds in their work. One cannot improve the teaching quality of a tutor by letting him follow a set of directives, scientifically designed or otherwise. First, the teacher's mind must be freed of all apprehensions. There should be a feeling of job security; the practice of appointing temporary teachers is not conducive to evok-

ing such a state of mind. How can one attend wholeheartedly to the task on hand when he is in constant fear of losing the job after a specified period of time?

A decent living wage must be paid the teacher. It is obvious that a low salary disturbs the mind of anyone; and in these days of "buy-and-sell," "ten percenters" and other lucrative sidelines, naturally the breadwinner's thoughts would have to turn to other sources of income. Briefly, the teacher must be given due importance not by mere lip service but actually raised to the proper stature of co-guardian, with the parents, of our children's physical, intellectual and spirituo-moral development.

However, not all these can come about by government action, more so under the present Administration. Nor can we of the opposition take up alone the cudgels for the teachers. As far as I know, there is no organization of teachers formed as a militant association to fight for their rights and opinions. In the practice of their precepts, their faithful obedience to duly constituted authorities, while a highly commendable quality has served to make them meek to the point of servility. A rigid code of ethics that has basis in the Department of Education forbids them to air complaints or any opinion to the public except through proper channels. Usually, along the line, a plea is stifled and the teacher gets nowhere. Such are the conditions that distract our teachers' minds from their responsibilities.

It is time they took lesson from their own selves. Their plight today affects that of our youth, the

citizens of tomorrow. In this era of the atom, wherein man has found the greatness of the commonplace, let our teachers discover the strength in themselves: for how can they produce militant citizens when they themselves are subservient? None can bridge the gap between the atom and the solar system except the social system of mankind; let those who reach for the stars gather strength from their origin.

It is, indeed, a national disgrace that our public school teachers should behave like frightened children at the sight of their superiors. While a teacher is a social and political being who has to live under some government organized and maintained by the collective will of himself and his fellow citizens, yet he is endowed with fundamental, inalienable and imprescriptible right to assert himself in defense of his honor, welfare, self-respect and his very own life.

As long as our public school teachers do not get organized into a compact, militant, intelligent whole that will stand and fight all forms of tyranny and despotism in their midst, they will always be nothing but pawns and mere instruments of self-seeking politicians, unprincipled and weak-kneed officials.

The Filipino teachers' lot would be that of cringing slaves, cowed, pushed around, slapped in the face and then later, to be whipped perhaps by tyrannical superiors with convenient impunity. Then the teacher becomes a lamb. And then the question arises: how can the lamb teach? And what will the lamb teach? I can not see any reason why the teachers, whose noble

profession is the highest intellectual calling in moulding the character of over 4,000,000 of our children now enrolled in the nation's institutions of learning, should act like a bunch of herded sheep that cower in fear everytime a high government or school official raises his voice before them. Wisdom without character is not education. Why should they be afraid to assert themselves in defense of their rights and honorable causes?

The Constitution and the civil service rules and regulations give them ample protection. The security of their position and tenure of office are guaranteed by our organic law in that, "no officer or employe in the civil service shall be removed or suspended except for cause as provided by law."

I have always had the greatest respect for teachers as I — like Quirino — consider myself one of them. But it pains me to quote a well-known Filipino newspaper columnist who aptly said that our school teachers have been "the same suffering hacks who are used to taking everything thrown their way."

"The problem of teachers," this journalist amplified, "is not the government; nor is it the unconscionable legislators who regard educational reform bills as football in political horsetrading. The problem of the teachers is the teachers themselves. The matter with them is that they are a group of timid, cowardly souls who will even refuse to raise their hand in defense of their own lives if the threat comes from their superiors."

"We have seen how teachers behave when they are subjected to treatment which will make a pea-

sant fight back. They behave like mice. Let but a governor raise his voice against schools and the teachers quake in fear. Let but a congressman however corrupt, make a threat and they bend their knees.

"They need not be afraid, really. All they have to do is to assert themselves, to tell their masters where to get off. All they have to do is organize themselves into a powerful union, controlled by nobody but themselves.

"The association they have now is useless. It is just being used by the Secretary of Education to impress the appointing powers with the number of his sheep. The teachers should scrap this association. They should organize a real union to which they must pledge their loyalty. Thus organized, they can strike fear into the hearts of those in power who recognize nothing but votes. Even the President will get off his high horse when teachers are around."

I repeat: National greatness depends upon the greatness of the nation's individual citizens. We cannot attain national greatness without human freedom. And freedom cannot be achieved without moral courage on the part of our individual citizens.

Freedom of thought and expression is guaranteed to all of us by our Constitution. We are all entitled to that precious human freedom and the teachers, more than anyone else, need it most in a civilized society of free men in a free world.

In closing, I reproduce what I wrote some four years ago, printed in the *Philippine Educator* (March issue, 1948) if for no other reason

than to cheer up all the teachers in the midst of their difficulties:

### THE CURRENT TEACHER

Teaching is a noble profession.

A selfless teacher toiling uncomplainingly, diligently, honestly in abnegation makes ours a happy world.

At break of dawn, this meek moulder of man's character faces the day with renewed faith and enthusiasm in his noble mission to develop moral character and enlighten the youth of the land.

At dusk, when the day's work becomes a prelude to another, a teacher smiles with pride and in solid contentment — for he has unselfishly contributed his just share to the cause of PUBLIC SERVICE.

In the deep silence of night, he burns his oil for the next lesson plan that will forge man's primitive instincts on the anvil of learning and equal opportunity.

Within the four walls of the classroom, he radiates wisdom, understanding and cheerfulness. By destiny, he is a maker of future citizens.

And like the Savior, unswayed by misgivings, "unawed by opinion, unseduced by flattery, undismayed by disaster," a cheerful teacher leads a full life of love, courage and Christian hope.

A teacher has every reason to be cheerful.

He has a beautiful soul. He has a divine mission to accomplish.

All honor to him!

## Education Through Medical And Dental Services\*

VENANCIO TRINIDAD



I CONSIDER IT a great honor and a rare privilege to address this convention of district health officers, city health officers, and school dentists of the Bureau of Health. At the outset, allow me to congratulate those who conceived the plan of this convention because, for the solution of any difficult problem that may beset an organization, for the reconciliation of conflicting views and opinions, and for the adequate consideration of projects for improvement, there is nothing better than

a conference at which the men and women concerned may have an opportunity for a free exchange of ideas and experiences upon which they can draw for the necessary incentive in their effort to ensure the growth and progress of their profession or the service to which they belong. This is especially true in a democracy where decisions regarding courses of action are arrived at through deliberation and discussion of the members rather than through dictation and imposition of a few.

\* Speech delivered at the Convention of School Physicians and School Dentists.