

administration to give special emphasis to the improvement of conditions in the barrios.

This movement is indeed something new in Philippine administration. Heretofore, government effort has been directed chiefly at improving conditions generally and especially in the cities and municipalities with the idea that the benefits would inevitably, if slowly, percolate to the barrio level. This has undoubtedly been the case, but the percolation has been slow. This is largely due to the fact that the barrios have been accorded such negligible rights of self government.

The McMillan-Rivera Report points out in this connection:

"A unique characteristic of the barrio is its almost complete lack of legal self-government. A municipality is a legal entity consisting ordinarily of a poblacion and from 15 to 30 or more barrios. As a part of the municipality, citizens of a barrio participate in the election of a mayor and council who, in turn, can enact ordinances which must be approved by the Provincial Board. As a political unit, the barrio is without legislative, executive, or judicial powers. The barrio lieutenant, a nominal counterpart of the pre-Spanish *cabeza de barangay*, is appointed by the municipal mayor although in practice the appointee usually is chosen first informally by residents of the barrio. His principal functions are to assist the mayor in enforcing ordinances; settling petty disputes; raising funds for the annual fiesta, Red Cross, and other drives; and entertaining visitors. A municipality receives revenues from a tax on real estate amounting to 1% of the assessed value, a tax on specific occupations, a tax on vendors who sell in the public market, and levies on other minor items. Larger municipalities also operate slaughterhouses for profit. Citizens of barrios can not levy taxes for roads, schools, water supply, police or fire protection, or for any other purpose. The services which barrio people receive for taxes paid into the municipal treasury consist chiefly of medical care by the municipal physician at his office in the poblacion, periodic visits of the sanitary inspector, and an occasional visit of a policeman from the poblacion. Nearly all schools in barrios have been built by voluntary contributions of citizens and nearly all barrio roads have been constructed from materials and labor supplied by the barrio people. However, with increasing frequency they are financed from municipal funds or 'porkbarrel' appropriations of national congressmen."

The lack of legal self-government in the barrios, and the general restrictions as to self-government in the municipalities and even the provinces, is a result of the general centralization of government not only in Spanish times, but as deliberately decided upon by the early American administrators. This centralization was very necessary in those earlier days, but is much less so today, and this ties in with President Maguysay's announced plan to effect some general decentralization of government.

In any program of barrio improvement, greater powers of local self-government should be accorded the barrios, because to encourage them in self-help is a far sounder thing than to submit them to being done good to by outside entities, necessary as this may still be for a time.

But there should be no pampering, no mere giving. The barrios should be accorded greater rights in managing their own affairs, and, further, need only encouragement, opportunity, technical assistance, and, of course, protection against lawless elements. Three-fourths of the people of the Philippines live in barrios, and these should not be encouraged in any way to come to depend upon government bounty. The barrios have so far been largely making their own way and the great majority of them have not done so badly. One has but to look at the many pages of photographic illustrations in the McMillan-Rivera Report to see that even in the barrios selected for the survey the people appear more content than the text would appear to indicate they have any reason for being. Our barrio people are, on the whole, an independent and self-reliant lot. Let them not be turned into public charges.

A quite unique and valuable little book has come to hand,—"The Skyland of the Philippines," by Laurence Lee Wilson (Baguio Printing and Publishing Co., Inc.,

## Progress in the Mountain Province Measured—L. L. Wilson

1953, paper-bound, 200 pp.). The work of the well-known old-timer, "Larry" Wilson, gold prospector and mining man, to which pursuits, however, he did not confine himself, the book represents the fruit of the greater part of a lifetime of observation and study of the Mountain Province and its extraordinarily interesting people.

### As Sinai C. Hamada states in the Introduction:

"Here is a bit of anthropology, archaeology, mineralogy, government, human relations, folklore, social investigation, all blended into a rare text of history."

It is richly illustrated and contains the photographs of most of the old-time American officials in the Province whose names have become almost legendary. Of special interest to our industrialists and businessmen are the sections of the book dealing with the history of mining and lumbering in the region.

Together with the book, came a reprint of an article by the same author published in the *University of Manila Journal of East Asiatic Studies* (for October, 1953). In this article he summarizes the economic advancement of the people of the Mountain Province in terms of wages and cost of living, as follows:

"The legal minimum wage has been set by the Government at ₱4.00 per day and this is generally followed except in distant farming communities where living costs are lower. If we compare this wage with the 5-centavo-plus-meals wage of 50 years ago, it would at first appear that wages have soared tremendously. But in reality this is not so. Using rice as the price index, we see that in 1900 the price of rice was about 5 centavos a ganta and the daily wage was the equivalent of about 1-1/2 gantas of rice per day. Since the price of rice is now about ₱1.00 a ganta, the daily wage is 4 gantas of rice per day. This is an increase of only 2.66% over the old days.

"Furthermore a study of costs reveals that this increase is due not to a lowering of production costs (because of improved techniques, as it should be) but that the increased wages are simply added to the other (including special services) mounting costs of production. Neither the farmers, nor the mines, nor most of the industries are as prosperous as in pre-war days, and the heavy increase in tax rates reveals the mounting costs of government services without a corresponding increase in either the amount or efficiency of these services. This is an overall unhealthy economic condition which eventually will lead to industrial stagnation and should be corrected. However, this substantial increase of about three times the income over the bare subsistence standard of former days does represent a very definite improvement in the standard of living of the people. They live in better houses under more sanitary conditions, wear better clothes, eat better food, have more educational facilities, and enjoy many of the comforts of civilization.

"It must be pointed out immediately, though, that this condition is not enjoyed by all. Some 64% of the people are illiterate, the Roman Catholic Church classifies nearly half of the people as being pagan, and many of them are still so isolated that we must estimate that only about 1/3 of them enjoy the above mentioned economic and social advancements and the remainder not to a full degree.

"Still, the overall wealth of the people has increased greatly and life is much better, as they all agree. Government economists estimate that the wealth of the Mountain Province has, during the past 50 years, increased 5-fold, while the population has been doubling from 135,841 in 1903 to 278,128 in 1948. Moreover, this wealth is no longer in the hands of a few, but is spread out more evenly and there is a growing middle class of tradespeople and professionals who share a considerable portion of the wealth."

Mr. Wilson envisages a more rapid progress in the near future with the development of hydro-electric power along the great Agno River, regarding which he states in his book:

"Of vast importance to the Mountain Province is the huge ₱105,000,000 hydro-electric project of the National Power Corporation at Ambuklao, Benguet. It will make an enormous change in the economy of all northern Luzon Island. . . . The construction of this project will mean millions of pesos spent here for labor and materials, while its completion should bring abundant cheap electric power furnished to most of northern and central Luzon, including Manila, thus to develop its many potential industries besides furnishing cheap power to the cities, towns, mines, and other present industries."