

- A sensible article on the disadvantages of Pilipino or Tagalog as the language for the nation or the schools of the entire country.

FORWARD WITH ENGLISH!

Or, Why We Should Not "Return Our School System To The Educational Darkness of 1900."

English or Pilipino? Let me shout my answer from the tops of the Chocolate Hills of Bohol: "ENGLISH!"

Not as our national language, if that is against your concept of nationalism, but as the medium of instruction in our schools. We must use English because it is the most useful, the most practical and the most adequate language in government, commerce, sciences and arts in our country and in the world today and in the foreseeable centuries ahead.

We cannot use Pilipino because there is no such thing. There is only Tagalog. And Tagalog is far from adequate, as admitted by everyone, including the Tagalogs themselves.

Recently I went to some government offices in Manila to transact some official business. I talked to the em-

ployees in English. They answered in Tagalog. Then I answered back in the Pilipino I had picked up in the provinces. The employees shook their heads and reverted to English. I junked my Pilipino and used English again. It was only then that we understood each other perfectly.

We should throw Pilipino into the waste can. It is useless.

Tagalog has been in our schools for some 30 years now: first as the "National Language," then as the "Filipino National Language," and lately as "Pilipino." For that length of time it has nothing to show but dismal failure. Despite memos and directives to love, learn and speak it, nobody appreciates it, much less speaks it, in the non-Tagalog regions. If ever it is used in speech or conversation, it is only to relate

off-color jokes of local vintage.

The provincial board of Bohol and the governor of Cebu are looking for Visayan translations of the Philippine National Anthem. They want their people to sing the Hymn in Visayan instead of in Pilipino. That is how unpopular Pilipino is in our region. Nobody reads the Pilipino sections of magazines, Pilipino names of offices and school buildings, and Pilipino versions of certificates and diplomas. They read the English.

A Pilipino division supervisor was assigned to some province. Bravely she began to "Tagalize" the teachers and pupils. The teachers and supervisors were required to talk in Tagalog in meetings and conferences. It was fun while it lasted. They were asked to earn units in Pilipino in evening and summer classes. (I think the right term is "buy," for they never learned to speak the language.) All these bore negative results. Now, the Pilipino division supervisor uses Visayan than Pilipino.

Why? Because Pilipino is useless in Bohol, while Visayan is used in the home, in

church, at the market, in programs, in offices, everywhere in the community. From praying to love-making the Boholanos employ Visayan. And those who reached high school and college write their love letters in English.

When the vernacular was made the medium of instruction in Grades I and II, it was a hit with the parents. They were glad to see their nine-year-olds literate readers in Visayan upon completing Grade II. In addition, the youngsters could also tackle numbers and some sentences in English.

So for the sake of those who will drop out after Grade II, I am for continuance of the vernacular as medium of instruction in Grades I and II. English should be, as now, taught as a subject in the first two grades. Pilipino should be scrapped in all the grades. The time devoted to it now in Grades I and II should be used for English. From Grade III up, English should be retained as medium of instruction. The time now devoted to Pilipino should be added to the time allotment for language arts (English).

This is the idea of one who has been in the government teaching service for the last 44 years. I consider only what is good for the country; what is practical and useful to the people; what would in the end make of us Filipinos truly world citizens talking the world language — English. I am not identified with any vested interests whose arguments are self-serving — like the Tagalogs who are for Pilipino because they want to remain Pilipino supervisors and lord it over the non-Tagalogs. Or make money in the Pilipino textbook industry.

Do not believe that native patriotism argument to support the need for a national language. We revolted against Spain, fought the Americans and ferociously resisted the Japanese with pure white-heat patriotism. There was no Pilipino then. A national language is not an ingredient of patriotism.

And forget that yarn about one being unable to express one's soul except in one's own tongue, whatever that means. If there is sense in that claim then we Visayans can express our soul only in

Visayan, the Tagalogs only in Tagalog, the Ilocanos only in Ilocano, the Ilongos only in Hiligaynon, etc. No Pilipino can express his own soul in Pilipino because there is no soul in Pilipino because there is no Pilipino yet; it has to be invented, developed and learned.

The plain truth is that a people learn a language. After having sufficiently mastered it, they, and that means their souls, too, express themselves in it. That's what Rizal and his contemporary writers did in Spain. That's what Garcia Villa, N.V.M. Gonzalez, Carlos P. Romulo (who is now reported to be pro-Pilipino) and a host of other Filipino writers in English are doing in English. As a matter of fact, in this debate over the language problem both the pro-English and the pro-Pilipino are expressing themselves in English. Nobody is using Pilipino to express his ideas and his soul in this debate because Pilipino is non-existent and therefore useless to the debaters.

As for the constitutional provision that we develop a national language based on

one of the principal dialects, forget it. Or amend it. Let us not be blind followers. There are provisions in the Constitution that have been found to be unwise. Let us change them. One is this provision about developing a national language. Another is the limiting of the regular session of Congress to 100 days. Now our lawmakers do not accomplish their work during the regular session. Then the government spends tremendous sums of money for special sessions. Why not make the legislators work throughout the year like other

public servants to earn their yearly stipends and avoid wasting money on very expensive special sessions?

To make Pilipino the medium of instruction in our schools would be to go back 68 years in our educational endeavor and return our school system to the educational darkness of 1900.

So forward with English! We have it for 68 years now and it has become the lingua franca of our people of different islands and tongues. —
By Joan Fernandez, Philippine Free Press, October 19, 1968.

WHY WHITE ELEPHANT

The King of Siam used to present a white elephant to the courtiers whom he wished to ruin. As the white elephant was sacred, it could not be disposed of in any way, and the expense of keeping it usually proved sufficiently disastrous. Hence, our modern term white elephant — and who has not thought he had one at some time or other?