

PRESENT SCHOOL SYSTEM

BAUTISTA

the progressive countries of the world go to school the whole day, ours go to school only about three hours a day. While other countries provide every possible inducement so that capable young men and young women would aspire to become teachers, we must be satisfied with inadequately trained and mediocre teachers because there is not sufficient inducement to attract the very best materials for teaching. Some of the very best teachers in the public schools have left and are leaving the service because they have found "greener pastures" elsewhere. It will be many years again before we can replace these hundreds of experienced teachers.

In our opinion, the problem of providing this country with an adequate school system is a matter of funds and the right kind of statesmanship. The issue involved is, to my mind, very simple. We need more appropriations. The present finances of the government cannot provide enough funds to make the school system adequate and to give the teachers better pay. There is only one solution to the problem, and that is to convince people that they have to come across with a little more help individually so that the necessary amount of funds would be made available.

In their desire to help solve the problem of raising more funds, the school authorities presented a bill in the last session of Congress which, if passed, would have gone a long way toward providing a more adequate school system for the Philippines. This bill the school authorities fondly called the Educational Act of 1947. But the bill did not go beyond first base. The bill would have restored Grade VII in the intermediate grades and would have abolished the pernicious two single-session plan. It provided for the imposition of a school tax of two pesos on every resident of the Philippines 18 years to 59 years old. It also provides that if the funds accruing from the school tax would not be sufficient, the municipalities and cities concerned could impose a tuition fee of not more than P20 in intermediate pupils. It is our feeling that there would have been little or no opposition to the bill if there had been sincere and honest efforts to acquaint the public with the need of raising more funds for the support of an adequate school system. We know this to be true because in the school year 1946-1947, when there was little hope that additional funds would be forthcoming, hundreds of Parent-Teacher Associations all over the Philippines raised an average of P1,400 from their respective communities in order to support a class of 40 to 60 pupils. The people now realize that education spells the difference between economic and spiritual slavery and freedom. They will make any sacrifice in order to get their children educated. The people have come to believe, and rightly so, that the schools are the fountainhead of their liberties. We are therefore convinced that the school tax of two pesos would not have been opposed by the people.

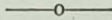
But the bill was squelched, presumably by order of the political leaders who saw in the bill a possible weapon that might be used against the party in power in the coming November elections.

As long as the political fortunes of the members of Congress are considered more important than the improvement of the school system, as long as political leaders remain unperturbed over causes and conditions that determine the fate of democracy in this country, which we feel is being jeopardized at this very moment by the lack of an enlightened citizenry, nothing will be done about the schools. There

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seems to be a general apathy here toward problems that cause a possible deterioration of belief in the ideals of Justice, Liberty, and Democracy. And this situation will worsen if we continue with the kind of anaemic school system that we now have. It seems inevitable that our common fate will be a kind of degeneracy, which is the inevitable fate of people everywhere who lack the necessary intellectual acumen to effectively participate in the discussion of public issues, force such issues to a decision through common counsel, and make public opinion truly and effectively prevail and result in positive action in all matters that affect the common welfare.

The question of the hour seems to be: Shall we allow an inadequate school system to continue producing citizens that are a little better than mere literates, or should we allow the people to decide whether or not they would be willing to shoulder a little more of the cost of a better school system? Shall we or shall we not do something to provide a better school system, even at the expense of our individual political fortunes? Shall we or shall we not provide a better school system so that the ideals of Justice, Liberty, and Democracy shall continue to be cherished by the people and consider these so important that they will be willing to undergo sacrifices in order to keep them?



Give Me Tears

Alvaro L. Martinez

Give me tears, acrid tears.
Beads of sweet
Of laboring emotions
Perspiring 'neath the heat of passion.

Give me tears, distilled tears
Hesitant raindrops
From clouds of doubts
Growing into a storm of rage.

Give me tears, sparkling tears.
Living dewdrops
On the withering petals of a woman's face
Singing of freshness in decay.

Give me tears, tears, saltsea tears
And the taste of joy's belabored rebirth.