



President Marcos signs proclamation declaring the period May 1, 1968 to April 30, 1969 "National Social and Economic Development year." Among those who witness signing are Labor Secretary Blas P. Ople and Bishop Mariano Gaviola.

National Solidarity Through Social Action

THE Filipinos have long suffered under a social order which has yet to shed its colonial past, and emerge from the repressive pressures of vested interests.

Thus in recognition of this social disparity, President Marcos declared the period from May 1, 1968 to April 30, 1969 as "Social Action Year."

Chairmanned jointly by Labor Secretary Blas F. Ople and Bishop Mariano G. Gaviola, "Social Action Year" offers the country a new appreciation of the Filipino common man and a greater re-evaluation of his needs.

The involvement of citizens, including special sectors like the different Christian Churches and the business community, in response to President Marcos's challenge to participate creatively in the task of nation-building is, of course, the focal point in the observance of social action year.

The partnership with the Churches heralded what the President had earlier called the "new ecumenism" in this country.

For centuries, the Church and the State have existed in a state of mutual distrust.

Today, however, the Church has steadily shown a growing enthusiasm for combatting the

threats of economic underdevelopment and disorder, and has opted for cooperation with the government, arising from the realization that the material needs of man need not be irreconcilable with the needs of the spirit.

Today, the Church is getting more and more involved in the development process.

There are no less than 2,000 projects being undertaken by bishops, priests and ministers of religious orders.

More than 500 Church-sponsored credit unions are in operation.

There are farmers' associations, piggeries, poultries and youth centers', housing projects have been set up in Cotabato, Sorsogon, Manila and Lipa. Irrigation projects have been carried out in Cotabato and Infanta.

The Church is also helping in problems of land tenure in Davao and Tagum, Surigao, Iligan, Cotabato, Negros Occidental, Antique and in Southern Cotabato.

More than 10,000 volunteer work programs have been undertaken with the help of Catholic Relief Services such as the construction of air strips, bridges, feeder roads, school buildings, and clinics.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Protestant Church, in the first seven

months of the social action year, completed 133 community development projects on a self-help basis in forty-five provinces.

Earlier, from July 1, 1967 to June 30, 1968, it distributed more than seven million pesos worth of food, used clothing, hospital supplies and equipment, agricultural equipment and machinery for community projects.

It is also operating twenty-two general hospitals and fifty-six clinics with a total bed capacity of over 2,000, treating more than a million patients annually.

The Iglesia Ni Kristo, on the other hand, has launched a community development program in Nueva Ecija.

The Philippine Independent Church and the Episcopalian Church are jointly initiating an urban renewal program in pilot areas, while the Muslims are similarly launching development projects of their own.

Thus, we see today members of religious organizations working in close harmony with government in various phases of development.

All these activities are generating national change, a change for progress — a result of which the forging of national solidarity and fraternity in social action is now a realizable dream. **FM**