

## BROADER HORIZONS FOR THE BARRIO PEOPLE

The approval of Republic Act No. 2370, otherwise known as the Barrio Charter, has given the people of the barrios wider opportunities for active participation in the affairs of their respective communities. As a result of this legislation, the barrio may now be said to have become a good training ground for democracy. The law has created the barrio assembly and the barrio council, which are charged with the task of governing the barrio. Among the powers and duties of the barrio assembly are (1) to adopt measures for the raising of funds for the barrio by taxation and by voluntary contributions and (2) to adopt measures for the good of the barrio.

Among the powers and duties of the barrio council are the following:

(a) To promulgate barrio ordinances not contrary to law or municipal ordinances.

Any violation of barrio ordinances shall be punished by a fine of not more than one hundred pesos or imprisonment of not more than fifteen days, or both such fine and imprisonment.

(b) To construct and/or maintain the following: barrio roads, bridges, viaducts, sidewalks, playgrounds and parks, school buildings, water supply, drainage, irrigation, sewerage, public toilet facilities, and other public works and facilities.

(c) To sponsor cooperative projects that will improve the economic condition and well-being of the barrio residents. Such projects may include stores for the sale or purchase of commodities and/or produce, and warehouses. It may also sponsor activities relating to agricultural and livestock production and marketing, fishing, and home and barrio industries. It may also sponsor

other activities which may promote the welfare of the barrio inhabitants.

(d) To accept, in all or any of the foregoing public works and cooperative enterprises, such cooperation as is made available by municipal, provincial, and national governmental agencies established by law to render financial, technical, and advisory assistance to barrios and to barrio residents. However, in accepting such cooperation, the barrio council may not pledge sums of money for expenditure in excess of amounts currently in the barrio treasury or obligated for other purposes.

(e) To initiate and submit to the Barrio Assembly community programs of economic and social benefit to inhabitants of the barrio.

(f) To employ or contribute to the expenses of employing community development workers.

(g) To submit to the Municipal Council suggestions or recommendations for the improvement of its barrio and/or for the welfare of the inhabitants.

(h) To hold benefits in their respective barrios with-

out having to secure permits from the Social Welfare Administration. The proceeds from such benefits shall be tax-exempt and shall go to the barrio general fund, unless previously set aside for a specific purpose.

(i) To organize at least twice a month lectures, programs, or community assemblies that may serve to educate and enlighten the people.

(j) To organize annually committees composed of men and women of high moral standing and integrity in the barrio to take care of the problems of juvenile delinquency if there is any.

(k) To appropriate barrio funds to implement the projects of the barrio assembly.

It will be seen that these powers, duties, and the responsibilities are broad enough to enable the barrio to undertake a variety of projects for its own improvement. For one thing, it may start a literacy project. Based on figures taken from the Census of 1960, it has been estimated that we have today more than five million illiterates in our country. Since about 65 per cent of our po-

pulation are living in the rural areas where educational facilities are not any too good, it stands to reason that a large portion, if not the majority of these illiterates are found in the rural communities. Consequently, if every barrio would undertake a literacy project and carry it out consistently for years, we would go a long way toward eradicating illiteracy in our country. Of course, suitable reading materials would have to be provided those who have learned to read; otherwise, they are likely to lapse into illiteracy.

But this is only one aspect of the solution to the problem of illiteracy. The other aspect is the accommodation in school of all children of school age. But very often the chief hindrance to the accommodation of children is the lack of a suitable building. For this reason, the barrio, under the leadership of its officials, would do well to use its initiative and its resources in building a schoolhouse so that it can ask for an extension teacher or a number of extension teachers, depending upon the number of children applying for ad-

mission. In fact, as we have seen, the construction of school buildings is one of the powers and responsibilities of the barrio council.

Educating both children and adults is the most effective way to eradicate illiteracy. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a high percentage of literacy, for studies have shown that countries with the highest percentages of literacy, like the United States, England, and the Scandinavian countries, are also the most progressive. On the other hand, those with low percentages of literacy are generally backward. Only recently, the Unesco reported its finding to the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East as follows: "From the viewpoint of economic development, literacy training appears to be the best means of increasing productivity." (*Unesco Chronicle*, September, 1966, pp. 338-341).

The barrio can also initiate a number of home industries. First, it can send some of its talented young people to the Nacida for training on condition that upon their return

they will devote their time and energies to the making of salable articles out of raw materials that are available locally. The agreement could contain a proviso to the effect that the amount spent in training should be paid back to the barrio in easy installments.

A few years ago we visited the barrio of Alabang in Muntinlupa, Rizal. Here we noted many families engaged in the poultry raising industry. They produced eggs for sale. In this way, they were able to add a considerable amount to their other sources of income. We were informed that this industry was started with the encouragement of the teachers. In the same way, the officials of any barrio would do well to encourage the people to engage in similar or other suitable projects, depending upon local conditions.

If the barrio does not have a good road connecting it to the main highway, it can build a feeder road with the help of the Presidential Arm on Community Development. Needless to say, good roads are essential in order that the farmers may be able to

market their products and the people can travel to the poblacion and other communities with ease and comfort. It will be readily admitted that one cause of the backwardness of a barrio is the lack of effective communication with the more progressive communities.

The barrio can also improve itself with the cooperation of all its residents. One good example of how a barrio has improved itself is what has been done in the barrio of Aguning on the island of Lapinig, within the jurisdiction of Ubay, Bohol. We saw this fishing barrio some years ago. Its streets were well laid out and each one had its name indicated on a post at the corners. In the middle of the barrio the people had erected a recreation center with galvanized iron roofing and a concrete floor. This building was used for holding meetings, programs, and dances. For the last activity, a small string rondalla had been organized under the leadership of the barrio lieutenant. A small portion of the building was set aside for a library. The achievement of this barrio

was so outstanding that it was included among the six community schools which were described in a pamphlet issued by the Unesco National Commission of the Philippines.

Another thing the barrio leaders can do in a farming community is to improve the methods of work of the farmers. In most cases, they are merely following the practices they have inherited from their ancestors. They do not plow the soil thoroughly. They do not select the seed for planting. They do not use fertilizer even when that is needed. They do not know how to fight and control plant pests and diseases. In cases like these, the barrio captain should seek the help of the agricultural extension worker to demonstrate to the farmers the modern and scientific methods of farming. Only in this way may we expect improvement in the yield of the farmers.

If there is a suitable stream that can be used for irrigation purposes, the people can start a community irrigation project so that they will not have to depend upon the rainfall, which more often

than not, is irregular. With such irrigation the rice farmers can have two harvests each year.

Still another project which the barrio may undertake is the improvement of the health of the people. For this purpose, it can dig an artesian well that can supply the community with clean and safe water. The council can pass ordinances calculated to improve the sanitary condition of the barrio. For example, it can require every household to provide itself with a sanitary toilet, preferably the water-sealed type. It can also require every home owner to keep its surroundings clean and sanitary. Furthermore, it can encourage the people to beautify their respective premises.

Lastly, of great significance is the duty imposed upon the council to have lectures given twice a month on topics that are of vital interest to the barrio people, such as those that refer to sanitation, marketing, better methods of farming, food selection and food preparation, and the like.

Enough has been said, it is believed, to show the op-

portunities that have been opened to the barrios as a result of the approval of the Barrio Charter. No longer do they have to depend upon the municipality since they are provided with the instruments for their own improvements. Consequently, whe-

ther the barrio will move forward or lag behind other similar communities will depend largely upon the residents themselves and their leaders. — *By Dr. Cecilio Putong, Former Secretary of Education, Freemasons' Educational Bulletin, Feb., 1967.*

### THREE REMARKABLE BROTHERS

A SCOTSMAN met an American, and both began to relate and boast about their respective countries, adventurers, and relations.

The American said: "I have three brothers. One's a baker, one's a bucket-raker, and the other's a thief. That is, one bakes, one rakes, and one takes."

Sandy replied: "I, too, have three brothers. One's in a coal mine, one's unemployed, and the other's in the asylum. That is, one brings up coal, one's on the dole, and the other's up the pole." — *Parade.*