

## WHAT DO WE NEED FOR

**A senator and a cabinet member point out what they think will help the country to solve its economic problems**

# Christian Principles

By SENATOR PEDRO R. SABIDO

**"E**CONOMIC life," said His Holiness Pope Pius XI in his *Quadragesimo Anno*, "must be inspired by Christian principles."

On the Church's authority on economic problems, His Holiness Pope Leo XIII laid down the principle that "it is our right and our duty to deal authoritatively with social and economic problems." (Five Great Encyclicals).

The economic problems that beset our country are not new. They are the same problems that other underdeveloped countries are facing, with certain characteristic variations impressed by past influences and the impact of contemporaneous developments.

We know their solutions. They are within our reach. They are, I may say, in our very hands. What renders them, however, sometimes difficult, complicated and almost unattainable, is not the intrinsic difficulty of the problems, neither our want of capacity or competency to cope with them, but the frailties of the human factor upon which in the ultimate analysis, rests the secret of success or failure of any human venture.

Cupidity for the possession of wealth no matter how, excessive love for luxury and comfort, lavish spending proclivities, want of sound and deep-rooted principles in our dealings, want of true love of country, narrow-mindedness, selfishness, greed, over-ambition and worst of all, cheap politics often times darken our perspective of things, leading us to adopt a negative if not an entirely misguided behaviour detrimental to our endeavours to build up a stronger and

healthier Philippines economically.

These human shortcomings have become glaringly manifested in the many hearings that the Senate Committee on Banks, Corporations and Franchises, of which I am the humble chairman, has conducted on important legislative measures related to our economy. I called on the best men, so to speak, of our country in their respective fields of knowledge. *My sad experience is that most, if not all of them could hardly detach themselves in the formulation of their views or opinions from their respective personal or group interests.*

Thus, on the matter of controls, for instance, when the witness is one of the beneficiaries of the system his testimony invariably was for the maintenance of controls, irrespective of their consequences on the general welfare. If the witness is one who failed to secure the approval of his application for dollars, his testimony was not only against controls but he would go to the extent of denouncing real or imaginary evils allegedly arising therefrom; and would not admit any resulting beneficial effect. Again, if the witness happened to be a member of the existing militant political parties, invariably he would condemn everything done or attempted to be done by the party in power.

We know, for instance, that development requires capital formation, and capital formation presupposes savings, and savings implies a certain degree of privation, personal sacrifices.

We know that luxury and the importation of luxury goods will in no way help us build

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"ANG TINIG NI MANG JUAN"

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up the economy of our country. And yet, in no period of our history have we imported more automobiles—and luxurious automobiles—than after World War II. Today our imports in this respect alone, including spare parts and gasoline, amount to more than P44 million.

We know that we ought to be and must be self-sufficient in prime essentials, particularly in our basic staple—rice. And yet every year, except in 1953 and this year, perhaps because of the bumper crop we have been graced with by God, we have been importing rice to the tune of P25 million to P30 million yearly. Why? Because the producers, particularly the big landowners have never effectively cooperated in the realization of this laudable objective for fear that over-production might cause a substantial reduction in the price of this vital commodity and subject them to losses or a diminution of their expected profits.

We know that in our almost half a century of association with the United States, this great country has prepared us for our political independence and for the enjoyment of a democratic way of life; but not for economic independence. She established in the Philippines a pattern of economy that has made us highly dependent upon the American market. It was only in 1955 that America—realizing that we could not continue indefinitely with such a pattern of economy—finally consented to gradually liquidate our free trade preferences until their eventual termination on July 3, 1974. And such arrangement was conceived in order to give the Philippines an opportunity to prepare herself for the impact of the changing condition by redirecting production accordingly and by enlarging her trade relations with and/or promoting new markets in countries other than the United States. And yet, simply because the present administration, in line with the policy that America herself has set for us to follow for the stabilization of

our economy, has explored and is exploring the possibilities of creating new markets for our export products or expanding existing ones in other countries and in securing the badly needed assistance, certain leaders of our country, obviously for political motives, have hurled the groundless charge that the present administration is veering away from the time-honored and battle-tested friendly relations with the United States and, what is worse, of conducting a hate-America campaign.

We know that as a result of the organization of the O.E.E.C. (Organization for European Economic Cooperation) by seventeen European countries, the Common Market Agreement among six European countries signed in Rome in March 1957 and which went into operation January 1st this year, and the proposed Free Trade Area, all of which organizations are designed to strengthen the European economy including their overseas territories, such as, Nigeria and Belgian Congo, there is a serious danger that our products eventually may lose the important European market, dislodged by substitutes, such as, palm kernel and *agaves*, the production of which is now being promoted in big scale in Africa, with the aid of tariff barriers. And yet, simply because our illustrious President has initiated a campaign for closer relations with the Asian countries with the aim in view of similarly creating amongst them an organization for the mutual economic protection of said Asian countries jointly with the Philippines, the President has been and is being unjustly accused of ingratitude towards America.

All these facts I cited to underscore the decisive role that the human element plays and will play in the solution of our economic problems. We need for the gigantic task that lies ahead not only learned men but unselfish, unbiased, and men with deep-rooted sound principles. We may only find such men, perhaps, among those imbued with Christian principles.

In his *Remum Novarum*, His Holiness Pope Leo XIII enjoined all of us: "Every one must put his hand to work which falls to, his share, and that at once and immediately, lest the evil which is already so great may by delay become absolutely beyond remedy. Those who rule the State must use the law and the institutions of the country; master and rich men must remember their duty; the poor, whose interests are at stake, must make every lawful and proper effort."

(Excerpt from a speech before Manila Council 1000, Knights of Columbus on March 4, 1959)