

YOUTH TRADE

Putting theories into actual practice

Since the second week of July, 22-year-old Romeo Balanon, a dark and lean commerce senior of the Far Eastern University (FEU) has been religiously going to the Quezon City offices of the Bureau of Commerce. Five days a week, from 8 a.m. to lunchtime, he assists the bureau personnel in ordinary office chores or in research data gathering. Sometimes he sits in on lectures and group discussions with fellow students and lecturers, also employees of the bureau. Occasionally, he attends to visiting businessmen and commercial agents. Going to the bureau, Balanon spends his own allowance for bus fare, snacks and, many times, for lunch.

Neither the bureau nor the FEU underwrites his expenses. The reward may be a job waiting for him after graduation.

"Getting a job then will not be difficult," Balanon explains. "In the past, a fresh graduate was usually given the run-around by business firms. But now, a fresh graduate armed with a certificate of work experience from the Bureau of Commerce will be entertained."

A classmate of his, Nella Origen who is herself an economics major, adds: "What we are doing now is one way of improving the economic well-being of the Filipinos. Our services may be modest but definitely

we are being considered as partners of the government, the schools and the business world in pushing forward trade, tourism and price control in the country."

Both Balanon and Origen are among some 1,600 commerce students now participating in the Youth Trade Promotion and Price Stabilization Program (YTPPSP), a joint venture of the Bureau of Commerce and all local colleges and universities offering courses in commerce, business administration, economics and the like.

Endorsed by Secretary of Education and Culture Juan Manuel to supplement the Youth Civic Action Program (YCAP), the YTPPSP was first implemented this year at the FEU Institute of Accounts.

Explaining the appeal of YTPPSP to students, Dean Pascasio Banaria of the Institute of Accounts said: "In the YTPPSP, the student of commerce or economics is in a community work that is relevant to what he knows. I believe that if every commerce student in the country participates in the program, he would indeed be doing a great service to the national socio-economic development."

YTPPSP work experience primarily is the compilation of fresh prices of basic commodities from all parts of the country. These daily price surveys serve as basis for price indices and as a guide for imposition of price controls.

Through YTPPSP, the government can pinpoint irregular pricing methods, end the dearth of price statistics and simultaneously curb anomalous registration of fly-by-night retailers.

To survey prices from as far north as the Batanes and down south to Jolo, the students employ a code system which they learn during lectures and workshops at the bureau. Daily price messages are sent to the central office through the communications-electronics network of the Philippine Constabulary.

This month, a well-equipped daily price monitoring room will be inaugurated at the second floor of the

bureau. Aimed as an apprenticeship center where student-participants can feel the pulse of prices hour-by-hour, it will also be a businessman's oasis.

In general the YTPPSP's objectives include orienting the students and the community to "the ideals, goals and activities related to trade promotion and price stabilization in the country"; involving them in advancing trade and price control in their respective communities; and making meaningful their classroom theories "through actual application of knowledge in the solution of trade and price problems."

Senior and junior students who choose YTPPSP instead of YCAP should earn a minimum of 120 hours of participation for graduation requirement. Their specific activities include orientation and office work, gaining an overview of trade promotion and price trends in the Philippines, daily decoding of prices and compiling a business and trade directory in local key trade areas. Students will also promote trade and tourism in seminars for Filipino businessmen, assist in consumer education and disseminate business information to retailers. Export potentials and trade connections will be surveyed in assigned towns and provinces.

Upon completion of the 120-minimum hours the student receives the certificate of participation from the Bureau of Commerce. Those who complete 200 hours will get Special Certificate B while those completing 300 hours Special Certificate A.

These special certificates are expected to guarantee jobs for YTPPSP participants in the future. Says Commerce Director Epifanio Castillejos: "Armed with the special certificate, one need not worry anymore about his employment. We will try our best to help the students find work as soon as they graduate. And since the bureau is currently undermanned, we will welcome special certificate holders into our ranks provided their other qualifications for vacant jobs are acceptable."



Commerce students at work: Ticket to high-paying jobs

RETAILERS' FUND

Drive to reeducate Filipino retailers

Lolita Tinampakan, a 23-year-old orphan residing in an apartment on Solis Street, Tondo is a secretarial graduate and former employee of an advertising firm. Recently she submitted to the Bureau of Commerce a project proposal that was turned down last March by the Department of Social Work not for lack of merits but for lack of funds.

The project? A P2,500 mini-diversified (sari-sari) store to be set up in Lolita's small apartment. The sari-sari store is intended to serve as "placement market" for the handicrafts made by the students of the 11 public schools located in the vicinity. It will cater to the thousands of students who bring their baons (lunch boxes) to school every day, to jeepney drivers who usually stop for a cold drink at corner stores and to residents of nearby streets.

In her proposal, Lolita said the

store would serve as a "social conscience and model to other small businesses in the area."

Director Epifanio Castillejos of the Bureau of Commerce, impressed by the independent proposal, paid Lolita a surprise visit to find out more about her project, a gesture which is rarely done by the bureau. In the past, it was the retailer applying for the loan who had to go to the director, not the other way around.

After the visit, Mr. Castillejos said: "Given the proper financing a retail project such as her's could succeed and serve as a fine example for retailers in Manila. Willing to cooperate with the government and the student participants of the Youth Trade Promotion and Price Stabilization Program (YTPPSP), and to be up on Lolita's small apartment, she gets one, Lolita has the making of the successful retailer we want to have."

Lolita may yet be one of the 10 model retailers to be chosen for a new retailer assistance program of the Bureau of Commerce. A similar project is being implemented in Dagupan City. The objectives of the program are to educate the Filipino retailer in retail procedures, interpretation of the retail trade law and

other courses such as bookkeeping and accounting, promotions and educating the consumer to patronize the Filipino retailer instead of alien-owned stores. Other pilot projects are planned for various key cities in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Invited to participate in the program are established retailers, businessmen, bankers and government commercial experts. This group will select the 10 retailers who will serve as models for the entire community. Then they will be given a maximum character loan of P5,000 by local private banks with the government serving as guarantor.

Those chosen retailers will be assisted by students of the YTPPSP program. The students will take care of booking, paying the amortization and the setting up of a pricing system.

Private banks are enthusiastically supporting the program. And except for the government guarantee, the retailers will be treated like any other legitimate borrower. "The private bank will make them pay the loan punctually," Mr. Castillejos said.

The government has had a sad experience in its retailer's loan program last year.

From August 1972 to March this

year, some P1.4 million had been loaned out directly to about 368 retailers from all over the country by the bureau. But these virtual delinquents resulted in haphazard handling of the funds and did not achieve the objectives sought. By harnessing the private banks, Mr. Castillejos said, the government "can help actively in curbing these pernicious values of our retailers" and at the same time make them into better retailers.

Complementing this assistance program is the reeducation of Filipino retailers through the bureau's open air lectures to vendors and market stall owners which will start in Manila soon. The program, among others, will explain the meaning of the retail trade law and local rules and regulations affecting the retailer.

Commenting on the significance of the retailer's reeducation, Director Castillejos said: "We cannot ignore the local Filipino retailer. In the past, the Chinese retailer proved to be a better retailer than he was. The Chinese didn't violate regulations, he had a good policy of attracting consumers. We want to succeed in our project to improve the Filipino retailer. It is in his sales system that we must start our task of educating him."