

A WELL-ROUNDED AND TOLERABLY CIVILIZED FILIPINO CITIZENSHIP IN A DEMOCRACY

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Our government is a democracy. "Sovereignty emanates from the consent of the people, by the people, and for the people." In other words, it is a government by public opinion.

Democratic governments depend upon an enlightened citizenry for its stability and perpetuity. To the extent that the masses of people are enlightened and educated and are conscious of their rights and responsibilities and duties, to that degree are democratic institutions safeguarded.

The Meaning of Democracy

Before we can sufficiently and intelligently characterize the essentially and fundamentally indispensable traits of a well-rounded and tolerably civilized Filipino personality in a democratic Philippines, we should form a clear and workable conception of the meaning of democracy.

Democracy involves the wholehearted acceptance of the idea that human beings are ends in themselves and not means to some other purpose. As aptly stated in Kant's dictum: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as end withal, never as means only."

The acceptance of this philosophy precludes the idea of regarding individuals as servants of the state; on the other hand the state is merely the agency for the facilitation of cooperative efforts of the individuals compos-

ing the democratic society. While the ideals of the group, and also needs, sometimes take precedence over those of a particular individual, all sacrifices and contributions are made for the ultimate benefit of the other individuals. Within a democratic philosophy human beings cannot be regarded primarily as citizens, or soldiers, or taxpayers, or customers, or patrons, or believers, but as the ends for which all governments, all economic activities, and all social institutions are maintained.

Democracy is also a process which calls for the sharing¹ of interests, activities, and relationships, of discussion and action; a form of government in which the people determine policies; a system of rights; a system of duties and responsibilities.

Our Constitution categorically directs our government to establish and maintain a complete and adequate system of public education in which future citizens may be taught moral education, personal discipline, civic conscience, vocational efficiency, and the duties of citizens.

Aims of Philippine Education

The aim of Philippine education, according to the Bureau of Public Schools, is "to produce well-balanced citizens who are prepared to take their proper places as individuals and as members of their respective social groups in a democracy". The important attributes of an educated citizen,

(1) Dewey, John D., *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1916) p. 95.

according to this aim, must encompass ten major activities, namely: ¹

1. language activities
2. health activities
3. citizenship
4. general social activities
5. spare time activities
6. keeping oneself mentally fit
7. ethical character
8. parental activities
9. unspecialized non-vocational activities
10. labor of one's calling.

Our Filipino Frontier Thinkers as to the Aim of Education

Our educational leaders of thought have propounded their educational ideas. Osias says that "education must secure freedom, efficiency, and happiness for all people". Palma: "Education must produce individuals who are both useful to themselves and society".

The Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association of the United States in its report entitled "The Purposes of Education in American Democracy" states the following aims or goals:

1. self-realization
2. human relationship
3. economic efficiency
4. civic responsibility

Shortcomings of Philippine Democracy

Effective Filipino citizenship in the Philippine way of life calls for a definition. We glibly speak of the Philippines as a democracy, but perhaps by taking thought, using one's background of observation and experiences, we find that the democracy that is being dished out to the people is a govern-

ment of big shots, of *padrinos*, of nepotism manifestly brazenly carried on in every nook and corner of our daily living. In short, our people, even the majority of the highly educated group, are not sufficiently conscious or sensitive to the meaning of democracy.

Democracy is the most desirable way of life. It is life itself. It has to be practiced and lived. Its essence is freedom. Fully understood and put to work, democracy is the highest obtainable goal for the growth and development of the individual. It is the solemn duty of every Filipino to zealously watch any sign that will undermine the working of a truly democratic Filipino way of life. This calls for effective, dynamic, and militant Filipino citizenship. Our educational resources and capacities should be geared to produce a well-rounded, competent and tolerably civilized Filipino in a democratic Philippines.

Characteristics of a Truly Democratic Filipino

1. He must be imbued and motivated by democratic attitudes and beliefs. The highest form of democracy is one that respects the dignity and worth of the individual. Respect of personality is the everlasting essence of democracy.

2. He must be concerned with the social welfare as well as with his own interest and needs. This calls for the reconciliation of the interests of both the group and the individual; benefits gained by the group is a gain for the individual and vice versa.

3. He must be possessed of the powers of critical and objective thinking. He does not depend upon symbols and labels which are often misleading; rather he should use facts in arriving at decisions. In short, he must have good habits of

(1) U. S. Bureau of Education Bulletin, 1918, No. 35 "Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education".

thinking which consist of approaching difficult situations by studying them, appreciating the issues involved, estimating possible outcomes, and reaching a reasoned decision as a guide to action.

4. He must have suitable work and study skills. No person can live in a changing democracy without keeping up-to-date with social and economic facts.

5. He must have functional information that can be put to work.

6. He must be able to adapt himself to the personal and social conditions which surround and confront him.

What Political Democracy Expects of its Citizens

The essence of political democracy is a thinking electorate, giving to thought, whatever its source, opportunity on its merits to affect practice. When the expert is accepted as leader in the government, the problem is shifted to that of followership and this can be best secured by understanding the fact that no body of experts is wise enough, or good enough, to take charge of us. Control must remain with the people. Decision must come from the people after careful deliberation.

The people charged with the reins of government should be possessed with expertness in their own lines and should serve the people with statesmanship and with honesty and impartiality. Self-sacrifice and devotion to the democratic way of doing things

should be the guiding principle.

The Filipino voter who has learned to think for himself considers customs and the opinion of others merely as data which can be used in the solution of problems, but not as solutions in themselves. Like the scientist in the laboratory, he wants to see hypotheses tried out before he accepts or rejects them. He has learned to suspend judgment when ideas are new and to be ever alert for something better than the old.

The obligation to vote is the essence of a democracy. In the Philippines, that vote is secret and entirely controlled by the volition of the voter. Sovereignty truly rests with the voter.

The tremendous significance of this fact is seldom appreciated by the average Filipino voter. To be sure, he realizes that by his vote he accepts and rejects candidates and issues, but yet his is a sort of an ordinary to-be-expected right. He does not take it seriously. In fact, if he is busy, he does not bother to vote at all. The average citizen does not realize that in the secret ballot, the democratic citizen can become the master of his fate.

Effective democratic citizenship, nevertheless, necessitates intelligent voting, that is, voting for candidates and issues which will bring about greater welfare of the citizenry. In other words, democratic citizenry presupposes that the voter has the ability to solve the problems of state effectively.

