

DIPLOMA MILLS?

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On two different occasions, Dr. H. H. Bartlett, U.P. visiting professor of botany, gave his views in what the **Manila Times** considers as the severest broadside on "local degree factories" or "diploma mills," as Professor Bartlett calls all private colleges and universities of the Philippines. Following are among his observations:

1. Education in the Philippines is fast becoming a commodity to be bought and sold in the black market of private schools. The rate private "universities" and "colleges" have sprung up since liberation is "a matter for amazement."

2. These institutions are "run for profit," and "do not allow their faculties to maintain high ideals, even in routine instruction, to say nothing of advanced training and research."

3. Calling themselves "universities," they are really false, and it is better to give them the right name, "diploma mills" or "degree factories," since "they operate under false pretenses to bring cash profits to their owners."

4. These "commercialized institutions" cannot possibly replace "the real thing," namely, the University of the Philippines. Furthermore, "The existence of these bogus organizations adversely affects the University of the Philippines by nullifying its efforts to maintain standards."

5. If public higher education breaks down in this country, "there will soon be an end of liberty of thought and of a proper educational medium for discovering and developing leadership." This must be so because "the University of the Philippines has provided the higher educational training of 60 per cent of all Filipinos in positions of leadership." With the state university "in desperate straits, the outlook for such a fountain of Filipino leadership is gloomy."

6. Educational institutions in the Philippines must follow world standards of research and scholarship, except with grave danger to the future of the Republic of the Philippines.

7. For this reason, "The recognition given to . . . commercialized private institutions should be held within bounds determined by their material facilities and the competence of their staffs . . . Granting of degrees should be rigidly controlled."

8. "If the Republic once allows the University of the Philippines to slip from its recognized position of leadership, to give up its parity with corresponding universities abroad, if it once allows itself to be satisfied with the sort of education represented by the commercial private schools, its future in world affairs will have to be determined by the number of its able young men whose financial means will enable them to study abroad. This prospect can hardly be pleasing to a democracy."

9. A university so called, that does not promote research is not a university, but only a fake and a poor imitation "of the real thing."

10. "Well-known men so readily permit their names to be attached to these more or less fraudulent educational enterprises that the government is either deluded about the qualifications of the 'universities' to offer graduate work, or is forced into a false position by political pressure."

Dr. Bartlett reminds me of the occasion in Columbus twenty years ago when a British lecturer visited the campus of Ohio State University. In the lecture which he gave he told his audience about his impressions (using his own words as well as I can recall) "of so-called universities in America which even compare with secondar

in England and Germany." He went on to underrate the hundreds of men and women who obtained their Ph.D. degrees in American universities every year. Since I was then in my last year for the doctorate, I felt depressed until I was told by one sitting next to me that that was the habitual way Englishmen showed their "superiority complex" and their bad manners. My friend added: "These Briton behave as though America still belonged to them."

I cannot believe that Dr. Bartlett is laboring under a similar delusion. Nevertheless, one might wonder—since he mentioned research and scholarship and being himself a scientist by profession—where he obtained the facts which formed the basis of so sweeping a conclusion that all private schools in the Philippines are "diploma mills interested only in bringing cash to their owners." One also would like to know how he arrived at the strange conclusion that the University of the Philippines is the only institution in the Philippines worthy of the title of a university.

Be that as it may, and regardless of the source of his information—or misinformation—it is our purpose in this article to examine and evaluate his conclusions on their merit, not in the spirit of self-defense but of free speech and for the sake of truth, the pursuit of which, according to him, is the supreme objective of a university.

First, the rate private colleges and universities have sprung up since liberation should not be a matter for amazement. On the contrary, it was to be expected. Increase in enrollment in all grades, particularly on the college level, is a world phenomenon. Even in the United States, which was not a battleground, universities which had ten thousand students before the war increased in enrollment by as much as 100 per cent in the last two years. In the Philippines, which suffered a "cultural out" for three and a half years, the enrollment in the young people's schools has increased from thirteen million educa-

tional years, should it be any cause for amazement if, after the "clear signal" was given, they would all want to resume their interrupted studies?

Let us look at the facts. During the occupation, the highest enrollment in any year was less than 500,000, or barely one fourth of the total figure in 1941. Furthermore, the average daily attendance during the period was nearer zero than fifty per cent of the monthly enrollment. Meanwhile each year there was added over half a million children who reached the school age of seven. After liberation all these and those that did not go to school or went to school on a token basis wanted to enroll. At the time of the liberation approximately 85 per cent of the school buildings in the country were either destroyed or severely damaged, together with libraries, school equipment, and supplies. What was worse, a large number of the teachers left the service. In one town in Batangas, "Out of a total of 34 teachers, only 10 were 1941 incumbents," the remaining twenty-four being substitute teachers, including undergraduates, all without professional training. The University of the Philippines could accommodate only a thousand or so at first and the Philippine Normal School could not resume operation for nearly two years after liberation. Before the war the percentage of professionally trained teachers was fifty. At the present time, it cannot be more than thirty if it is that high. That is to say, out of 57,000 public school teachers 39,200 or more have had no preparation for teaching.

Now, which would have been better and more sensible—allow the private schools to absorb what the public schools could not accommodate, or wait for the attainment of world standards? allow the opening of new private schools to train teachers, or wait until the College of Education of the University of the Philippines and the Philippine Normal School could have enough room and teachers to enroll the 10,000 that were

then needed to replace those that had left the service? What would Dr. Bartlett have done in facing such a situation? Instead of being amazed, one should be thankful that the Filipino people proved equal to the task of meeting a real need by opening new private schools and that the proper authorities approved the opening of such schools. For, unlike the building of a new road or the writing of a book, the education of children cannot be long delayed.

Second, while we must admit that all private schools in the Philippines are run for profit, it is not true that all of them are run solely for profit much less that all of them do not allow their faculties to maintain high ideals of instruction and advanced training and research. It is not true that the University of the Philippines is the only institution of higher education that is worthy of the name "university." Long before—in fact three centuries before the University of the Philippines came into being—there were a number of institutions that offered higher degrees to students who later became leaders of thought and action in the Philippines. Do we need to name them? Before and after the war, Far Eastern University did excellent work in accounting and business and finance; Adamson, Mapua and lately, National, in engineering and technology; Philippine Women's University, in home economics and nutrition; Centro Escolar University, in dentistry, pharmacy, and optometry; Arellano, in law; Santo Tomas, in medicine, law, architecture, and music; National Teachers College, in the training of teachers. These institutions and others like them are not and never have been "diploma mills" or "degree factories." Most of them, in fact, suffered financial reverses during the depression, but they continued operating without cash profits to their owners. Centro Escolar University, for instance, had to sell half of its lot and pay the

teachers with "chits" and "shares" for quite some time.

And why must it be presumed that because an institution is run for profit it does not allow its faculty to maintain high ideals of instruction and advanced training and research? On the contrary, the owners of private schools know from experience that the better the instruction the larger the enrollment. Students, as a group, know which institutions have high standards and which do not. As proof of this, the private schools that have the largest enrollments are those with known high standards, such as those mentioned above.

Third, while it is to be admitted that the University of the Philippines has its own special lines—agriculture, medicine, and law, for instance—it must not be concluded that it excels in all lines. In agriculture it has no equal, for the simple reason that there is no private college of agriculture. But in medicine, law, education, engineering, dentistry, liberal arts, home economics, and the rest, no U. P. alumnus would be so naive as to claim that his Alma Mater is unbeatable and cannot be replaced. Speaking of research what colleges of the state university are doing or have done significant research work besides those in agriculture and medicine? And even if it excels all the private schools in all lines, which it does not, why shouldn't it, with all its advantages as a tax-supported institution, preferential treatment, and other priorities?

Fourth, for graduate work the University of the Philippines is not by any means the foremost institution. Having examined forty-three Master's theses (1947) from the ten-colleges and universities offering graduate work, I can truthfully say that the three theses from the University of the Philippines in science, English, and psychology, were not the best in the group. In fact, I would rate them as only average in quality. I do not conclude from this limited

tion that the state university is only average in standing in graduate studies. On the other hand, I cannot, from this fact and from other facts generally known, conclude that the University of the Philippines is the best in everything, much less that it is the only university worthy of the name. (See Abstracts of Master's Theses, 1947, in: *Philippine Journal of Education*, August 1947.)

Fifth, it must be admitted that there are private schools whose sole purpose or major concern is to make money. They are truly diploma mills or degree factories. But are there not diploma mills and degree factories in the United States? There are private schools and private schools everywhere. The diploma mill is not a Filipino invention. In fact, we have had it only since American occupation. During the Spanish regime there were no degree-factories. Dr. Bartlett seems to think that the diploma mill institutions in the Philippines would adversely affect the University of the Philippines. One might seriously ask: Why? Are the diploma mills in Chicago and New York and other large cities affecting Harvard, Columbia, Chicago, Cornell, and Michigan universities? One would think that a good test of greatness in anything is incorruptibility, and if the University of the Philippines would be corrupted by the presence of diploma mills, perhaps it is not so great as Dr. Bartlett would lead us to believe, after all. But that is not my own conclusion. It follows from Dr. Bartlett's own premises.

Sixth, why should one agree with Dr. Bartlett in thinking that if the University of the Philippines breaks down, "there will soon be an end of liberty of thought and of a proper educational medium for discovering and developing leadership?" Is not this another of the many assertions of Dr. Bartlett's that cannot be proved? Even granted that the state university has provided the educational training of 60 per cent of the Filipinos in position of leadership, it follow that it will al-

ways do so? Would Dr. Bartlett admit that freedom of thought in the state of Michigan will end if the University of Michigan breaks down? If not, why the fear as far as the U. P. is concerned?

Seventh, what does Dr. Bartlett mean by world educational standards? What world? Before the war, Germany, not the United States, was the leading center of research and scholarship. In the history of education books which I have read, including those written by Cubberley and Paul Monroe, we find statements claiming that M. A. and even Ph.D. degrees in America were the equivalent of the A.B. degree in Germany. Presto! Where did Germany and German research lead the world in 1939? What if Germany had six more months to continue the research on the atomic bomb before V-E Day? Dr. Robert M. Hutchins said only a few days ago that two of the bombs being made now would render the entire United States uninhabitable. Just a little more research and one bomb will be sufficient to make our planet uninhabitable! What a prospect that is!

One way to argue a point is to beg the question. Why should a university exist exclusively or even primarily for research and the pursuit of knowledge? We used to believe that knowledge is power. We still do, but what power and for what end? This is no research question, but it is a very pertinent question at this time when the world is at the brink of a war that may end human existence. Why does the Western world mistrust Russia and the U.S. as shown by a recent Gallup poll (*Tribune*, August 8), if not because they have the secret of atomic power? Research? Yes, but for what end!

Going back to standards, is it not about time that we evolve our own standards of value, of research, of education, of law, and the rest, not disregarding the rest of the world but taking into account also our own local needs and conditions? America developed its own independently of English standards

in research, in scholarship, and in everything else. Why must we be so dependent upon America and the rest of the world that we must always have to base our patterns of government, education, social life, and the rest upon what is going on elsewhere? What are standards for? Are they merely to serve to measure ourselves against other peoples, or are they to serve to make us live better lives in our own country now? Nowhere in the world is the double-session system practised except in the Philippines. That is a condition and a fact which we have to face. Our teacher-education program must take account of it and prepare teachers accordingly and regardless of standards in Ohio or Paris. We have only a few Ph.D.'s in all lines, so if we want to give the Master's degree to those who may be assigned college work, we cannot impose the same standards and requirements as those imposed in Chicago. Only thirty per cent of our teachers are professionally equipped to teach. We have to accelerate normal work and encourage private schools to train teachers. The education of the Filipino youth—only half of whom are going to school now—cannot be further delayed because we cannot have college graduates to teach in the elementary grades or pay them P400 a month as they do now in some cities and states in the United States. There are no fixed standards of value, except at the risk of subordinating human welfare to such standards. Standards of education, of living, of sanitation, of government, of traffic, and of everything else must be flexible enough to meet human needs, which means that they are relative to the time, place, and culture of the people. Standards are for man, not man for standards.

Eighth, Dr. Bartlett complains that "well-known men so readily permit their names to be attached to these more or less fraudulent educational enterprises that the government is . . . deluded about

the qualifications of the 'universities' to offer graduate work." In answer to this grave charge, all we can say is: "The view depends upon the point of view." First of all, private schools are rendering a very useful service, which the government is unable to provide, and they should not be closed. If this be so, staying away from them is not the way to help them improve. I take it that what Dr. Bartlett means is that those who have had the benefit of higher-education in American and other foreign universities must keep away from the private schools. What a strange attitude to take! Is Dr. Bartlett concerned about Philippine education and the welfare of the Filipino people as a whole, or is he interested only in condemning the private schools and in seeing them closed because they constitute a threat to the leadership of the University of the Philippines? Secondly, if so-called "well-known men" do not help the private schools, who should help them? Thirdly, does their joining the private schools necessarily mean their connivance with these schools for evil purposes, or might there be a chance that they be a factor for good? In fact, might they have joined the private schools purposely to help improve educational standards there? How can Dr. Bartlett be so ungenerous as to impute unworthy motives where, for all he knew or cared to find out, the intention and result might be just the opposite of what he claims? Physician, heal thyself!

We have heard that members of the faculty of the University of the Philippines are prohibited from teaching elsewhere. Would it not be better, taking a total view of the Philippine educational situation, if they were allowed to, first, so that they may help improve standards in the private schools, and, secondly, to enable them to earn a little more than they are now getting from the government? Af

professors have to live before they can teach or do research work. Perhaps such an arrangement will help prevent the future exodus of U. P. professors to other schools, where they are paid better salaries and given more freedom to use their spare hours to earn more money with which to support their families on a standard of living that befits their social standing in the community. While it is true that professors cannot live by bread alone, it is also true that they cannot live without bread.

And while we are on the subject—helping to improve the private schools—might it be suggested that the government do more than supervise them and grant them permits or recognition to operate? Like the proverbial chain that is only as strong as its weakest link, the Philippine educational level will be raised only if all the schools—public and private—are improved simultaneously. Why shouldn't there be exchange professorships between the private schools and universities and colleges abroad through the good office of the government? Or, for that matter, why shouldn't there be exchange professorships between the University of the Philippines and the private universities? After all, no institution, be it ever so great and exalted, has the monopoly of wisdom and knowledge; and no private school, be it ever so humble, lacks the initiative to improve its standards.

A few years ago, the State of Ohio was considering very seriously giving financial aids to parochial schools on the ground that, like all other parents in the State, the parents of the children attending these schools pay school taxes. In the Philippines we all pay the taxes that support the University of the Philippines, but only a selected few can be admitted there. Why not give some financial aid to private schools as an incentive to the students who cannot be accommodated in the state universities? Would not this arrangement be

better than requiring the private schools to pay one per cent of their gross income from tuition fees for the supervision of their work? An arrangement of this kind would make the private schools public institutions, as indeed they are or should be in the sense that they are a part of the educational system of the nation. It will also do away with the negative and suspicious attitude toward these schools which, unfortunately, does not make matters any better either for the private schools or the public.

In closing, may we ask our distinguished visiting professor to help us with our problems by showing how our private schools might improve their standards, select better teachers, train scholars and research workers in short, to give us the benefit of his positive wisdom and experience? We have trouble enough trying to increase the percentage of the youth of school age in the scholars and research workers in short, it should not matter in what school the unaccommodated fifty per cent go if they have even half a chance to become literate. The private schools are now taking care of over ten per cent of the total enrollment. Every means should be employed to encourage them to improve the offering of these schools, and it is everyone's duty to see to it that they do so by not tempting the private schools to lower standards or by demanding unreasonable concessions from them.

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