

REMARKS BEFORE THE 1948 CONVENTION OF THE PHILIPPINE PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

ESTEBAN R. ABADA
Director of Public Schools

Mr. President of the Association, Delegates to this Convention, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure for me to greet the delegates to this year's convention of the Philippine Public School Teachers Association. I commend the spirit which prompted many of you to come all the way from your respective provinces to attend this convention. I commend likewise the militancy of your association, its proven initiative, and its readiness to help resolve the problems which confront the teachers and the schools of our times. In more ways than one, the association has rendered much yeoman service to the Bureau of Public Schools, especially in connection with our program of ameliorating the teachers' lot and strengthening the curriculum, and I trust that it will long continue to render such service, not only in behalf of your own individual interests, but also for the sake of the larger interests of the educational system to which we all have the honor to belong.

With regard to the improvement of the teachers' welfare, I believe it will be like bringing coals to Newcastle for me to inform you of what the Administration has done so far. Nevertheless, let me state that under the late beloved President of our country, the basic salaries of elementary teachers were raised from P55 to P80, in the

case of normal school graduates; from P45 to P70, in the case of secondary normal school graduates; and from P40 to P60, in the case of high school graduates. Under the Appropriation Act for the ensuing fiscal year which is now under study by His Excellency, the President, the benefits in terms of salaries that will accrue to the teachers are even more desirable. Allow me to quote from this Appropriation Act: "Elementary school teachers who are graduates of Bureau of Public Schools collegiate normal schools and of the teacher's curriculum in the collegiate schools of arts and trades, graduates of private junior normal schools and colleges offering two years of normal work above the secondary level, and holders of the degrees of bachelor of science in education, bachelor of science in home economics, high school teacher's certificate, bachelor of science in agriculture with certificate in agricultural education, and any bachelor's degree with at least eighteen units in education are being provided a standardized pay of P1,680, which is more than the combined basic pay and bonus of P1,380 heretofore granted them. Elementary teachers who are graduates of Bureau of Public Schools secondary normal schools and of private secondary normal schools and holders of any bachelor's degree not mentioned above are being provided a standardized pay of P1,440, which

is more than the present combined basic pay and bonus of ₱1,380."

Then, too, let me mention the reported passage by Congress of a bill extending to temporary, emergency, and substitute teachers who have been in the service continuously for three years the benefits of vacation leave with pay; of the bill providing for the payment to government employees of their salaries corresponding to the period of the enemy occupation; of a new retirement act giving as much as two years' pay for teachers and other employees, 65 years old, who have served the government for more than 24 years; and of the bill raising the minimum rates of monthly compensation for various positions in the educational service.

The Bureau of Public Schools does not want to claim any share of the credit for these measures. But it is no reflection on anybody and it is by no means stretching the truth for me to say that our Bureau had at one time or another prepared the drafts of bills on the foregoing or similar topics, or that it had actually worked for the passage of most of them.

For all of these impending laws the teachers of the public schools have every reason to be grateful to the present Administration. Lest, however, they raise their hopes unduly, or, because of these favorable signs, strain themselves after things quite beyond their reach, I should like to point out that it may not be possible to execute or implement some provisions of the foregoing measures unless our Congress accordingly provides additional appropriations. It will not be possible, for instance, to adjust the salaries of all our teaching personnel to the authorized minimum rates unless we receive such necessary additional out-

lays. It is only proper that you should know of this fact.

And now with regard to the strengthening of our curriculum. In a manner that befits people of intellectual poise and calm, serene judgment, we shall perforce continue to fight for such strengthening as sought in the proposed Educational Act of 1948. Nor shall we, in this connection, allow the importunities of men to impair our enthusiasm or deflect us from our determined goal. This is to us a righteous cause, a crusade in itself, which we cannot shirk if we are to remain true to our role as custodians of the education of our youth. That such a measure as this is imperative is only too obvious. Indeed, I have yet to meet an experienced teacher in the field — whether he be a classroom maestro, a principal, a supervising principal, a district supervisor, a subject supervisor, an industrial supervisor, an academic supervisor, or a division superintendent of schools — who does not believe that we should restore the double session program in the elementary grades and Grade VII to our curriculum. Somebody has called the unfortunate situation in which our public schools now find themselves as a result of the shortening of the elementary course to six years as an "educational mess." I believe this is a rather strong term to use, but if we must call a spade a spade, I must concede it is that — and nothing less.

We recognize the fact, however, that in our country the matter of adopting educational policies or of introducing educational reforms rests too often in our legislative body. If only for this reason we have to yield to the sterling sense of values and the patriotism of the members of our Congress. Now, if it is true that Congress will hold a

special session sometime this month, I should like to request our teaching personnel, either collectively under the Philippine Public School Teachers Association or individually as citizens of this country, to help our Bureau convince our lawmakers of the urgency of this educational measure. Let us make the issues clear. In the primary grades, the teacher is required to teach two classes of forty pupils each, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. In the intermediate grades, the teacher is forced, because of the operation of the one-teacher-one-class plan, to teach subjects like industrial arts, home economics, or music, for which she may have had very meager or no professional training. In the primary grades, a pupil comes only in the morning or in the afternoon. Hence, besides getting only a little amount of schooling, he maybe exposed to unwholesome or even evil influences during half of the school day that he does not go to school. The school hours per session have been reduced and the length of elementary education has been shortened to six years, thereby giving the Filipino child not only a smattering of the school subjects but also an abbreviated elementary education. These facts, I need not tell you, are contrary to correct educational practices in the

progressive countries of the world today.

Whether this Educational Act of 1948 is so revised as to provide for the setting aside of ten per cent of the entire budget of the National Government for the implementation of its provisions, is to me immaterial. What is important to me — and, I am sure, to all of you who are devoted to our school system as only people who have helped it grow to its present tremendous proportions can be so devoted—is that the government take immediate steps to arrest any further deterioration in the standards of instruction in our public schools. Today and tomorrow and all the coming years, we must give the children in these schools the training for livelihood, for citizenship, for participation in a democracy, which they so amply deserve. Zealously must we keep our faith with them and with their parents.

Ladies and Gentlemen, once again I congratulate you for holding this convention of your association. I trust that when it is all over, you will return to your various stations in our far-flung archipelago, “fleeting your disillusion” over your petty problems and “lasting your fervor” for our great profession.

DELEGATES' REMARKS . . .

(Continued from page 31)

12. “I feel that a similar convention of all teachers in every division should be held once a year. The district associations may be represented by delegates. It is perhaps desirable to hold the division convention soon after the national PPSTA convention so that the results of the latter convention may be

known to all teachers and school employees.” — Mr. Rufino Marin, delegate from Isabela.

13. “I observed in my brief stay at the convention that the delegates were discussing problems and issues on a highly intellectual plane.” — Mr. Esteban R. Abada, Director of Public Schools.