

Sinco: Education in Philippine Society

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From first to last, this new book by President Sinco of the state university is a good sample of a vigorous mind immersed in the liberal revisionist concepts of education as a tool for transforming Philippine society. The basic idea which runs through the book and which is repeated over and over in inimitable ways is that education's peculiar function is the rigorous training of the intellect on such a broad scale as to touch and quicken all its powers and therefore those of the personality.

The book contains fourteen chapters, some fairly long, some quite brief, but all equally meaty and characteristically crystal clear. From the mission of the U.P. as a public institution of higher learning to the kind of faculty and student body a true university should recruit, from education as a tool of nation building to the improvement of university standard and the role of a university in Asian cultural cooperation; from the relation of the university with science and research to the identification of vital issues in higher education, etc. — the whole gamut of education's aspirations and problems is treated here in kaleidoscope.

This collection of articles is based upon public statements delivered on several important occasions before university audiences and civic organizations. The highly praised inaugural delivered before a big select audience when the author assumed the presid-

ency of the University of the Philippines, is included in this permanent collection and stands out as a sound, statesman-like pronouncement by an authority. In this inaugural, the functions of a true university are outlined within the general-education framework which Dr. Sinco thinks is the foundation-stone of all education, including specialization.

President Sinco criticizes the proliferation of courses which he thinks leads to superficiality and unnecessary expenditure of time and effort and money. He inveighs against the undue emphasis on methods in education at the expense of substance and thorough mastery of subject matter. He deplores mediocrity in faculty performance and student scholarship. He minces no words against the shallow teachers' colleges and by implication views with suspicion the unproductive scholar who merely parrots the ideas of others. In short, he looks down upon sloppiness and charlatanism whether these be found in a person or in an institution. Throughout the book he stresses the imperious demands of perfectionist excellence as the goal of true education. The public school system as such in this country comes in for a terrific drubbing.

Here is a man in high position fighting the *status quo* with a stubbornness that could arouse resistance from conformist and obscurantist quarters but

admiration from those who plug for new adventures in refreshing change. Stagnation and repetitive routinary motion, the servitude to the herd, the fear to re-examine "revered" traditions that are no longer germane to the context of a changed and changing world — these are the things that Dr. Sinco fights to hasten a new future for a new country. And so he lambastes commercialism in education, fanaticism and intolerance in religion, narrowness in nationalism, crassness in politics, superstition of race. And so he wants the universities of the country to purge themselves of their dross; he wants the government university to be the consummate flower of Filipino maturation and thus mark the Philippines as worthy to be reckoned with among the respected countries in Asia.

That is why he wants ideas — fertilization of ideas — no matter from what sources they come. In private conversations he expresses a conviction that American ideas as such must be fertilized by European ideas, and, as all these come to the Philippines to blend with Filipino ideas in the vast backdrop of our Asian heritage, a rich civilization will develop, as has been developing before our very eyes for countless years. Civilization, as the "sum total of the contributions of many races, many regions, and many philosophies that have passed through the process of selection and crystallization in the choice of the best and the noblest," has meaning for the Filipino only if he first exhausts his own self-discovery and contributes his own genius to that sum total. That is why the author has said in public and private that special effort must be exerted to stress Philippine studies because

the Filipino must know the rich treasure-trove of his past before he can use wisely the accretions from sources outside his own.

The style of the book is so clear and the thinking so logical that there is no mistaking the texture and direction of the Sinco mind. And yet the very simplicity of phraseology is deceptive because the superficial reader who looks for pedantry and tinsel language will miss what is hidden behind the simple construction of the pregnant lines and the unusual precision in the use of words. (After all, the profoundest and wisest thoughts in any language are couched in the simplest and clearest terms.) The purity of Sinco's English, uncorrupted by the cumbersome frills and the labored superfluities of writers who are not really writers, is the measure of his culture. The fact that his scholarship is broad and sound, whether he speaks on education or in the field of law, in which, long before, he had made a name as constitutional authority, speaks of the depth and breadth of that culture.

The book has a strong appeal to the upper crust. Educationists, social scientists, college professors, government officials, and college students should read it. The reader will profit most from it if he reads slowly and ponders the implications of the social assessments. Isolated direct quotes from the book could be framed and hung on the wall with the same pride one gets from older sources.

It is not commonly known that Dr. Sinco wrote his fifteen books and numerous scholarly articles and speeches by dictating to a stenographer. He can dictate for hours and hours with sustained concentration no matter

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what the interruptions are. This new book is a result of such dictation in the midst of other preoccupations in his job as president of a university. He edits his own works. All this is mentioned not as a digression but as an emphasis that he is his own master in the field of scholarly thinking as well as in his present position as an executive and a leader of men.

Since no one ever writes a perfect book, one weakness that might be mentioned in the present volume is that the brief chapters could well have been developed more fully like the others. The effect of deliberate abbreviated treatment is like tasting appetizing food at the start, only to find that there is no more to eat once the appetite has been fully aroused. Which probably in this case is a device of strength, not a weakness, based upon the "theory of curiosity." But if it be a weakness, this is anticipated in the author's introductory when he says that "...the work is not intended as a unified presentation...but rather a series of separate discussions..." Besides, that would have made the book thicker than was originally intended. Elaborations on Dr. Sinco's abbreviated ideas can be found in his published and unpublished works.

If anything, *Education in Philippine Society* could well be a precursor of more books to come in the same field, judging by the healthy restlessness of the author to influence education in this country and to change the face of the University of the Philippines in his capacity as president, just as there were a number of books that flowed from his pen when his chief preoccupations were then those of professor and dean of law. Δ

WB Dr. T. Harry Williams of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, was a January visitor in Grand Lodge. He was accompanied by Mrs. Williams. The couple are on a world tour and were very glad to be in the Philippines in the course of the trip.

WB Williams and his wife were long-time medical missionaries in Chengtu, China, prior to its occupation by the Reds which forced them to retire from the service and go home to Manitoba to enjoy their well-earned rest.

WB Williams is a Past Master of Szechuen Lodge which was the only lodge operating in China in World War II and also the only lodge which decided to remain under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines when the Grand Lodge of China was organized shortly before the last war.

Word of the coming of the Williams was relayed to Grand Master Ofilada by Bro. Dr. Wing Kwong, a member of Amity Lodge No. 1 of the Grand Lodge of China which is now in Taipei, and also of Szechuen Lodge No. 106 of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines. Lodge No. 106 is presently non-operating. Bro. Kwong now resides and practices in Hong Kong.

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Freedom of religion and of thought and of speech were achieved by denying both to the state and to the established church a sovereign monopoly in the field of religion, philosophy, morals, science, learning, opinion and conscience.

Walter Lipmann