

The lead article in this issue covers the student demonstrations that erupted at last month's end. The suddenness with which the students have taken to the streets to air their grievances has taken aback even the keenest of observers of the Philippine scene. And why not? The students were asking, among other things, for lower tuition fees at a time when the universities were already preparing to close doors on the present school term! Were the fees right at the beginning of the school year?

Whatever the real motives that precipitated the recent demonstrations, it now seems obvious that the schools as well as the country's educational system are confronted with a crisis of management. Worse, what seems to ail the educational system ails the economy too.

The real manifestations of this crisis have long been evident although not seriously recognized and dealt with by those concerned. Past administrations had in fact sensed this problem and President Marcos, particularly, had responded to it by increasing the share of the educational system to approximately one-third of the total national budget.

Actually, we don't have to look far to discover to what extent we have erred in the management of our resources in educating the young. During the postwar years the educational mill produced none too flattering quantities and quantities of graduates, so much so that we are today faced with the spectre of a scattering legion of trained unemployed. Sad still, we have a growing pool of manpower skilled mainly to man typewriters, practically none to man machines and tools. And since the growth of the economy, even with the tremendous strides in infrastructure and food sufficiency programs of the Marcos administration, has not kept pace with the output of our diploma mills, the crisis of management in our educational system becomes gigantic. The uneconomic use of available resources for education is reflected in the large number of school dropouts and in the alarming number of ill-prepared students in colleges and universities. Many of those in college have no business being there since they neither have the training for higher disciplines nor the aptitude necessary to meet the challenges ahead. And yet the public and private investments in education represent the biggest portion of our national expenditures.

This is not arguing against the high rate of investment in education. On the contrary, we should invest more but wisely. Especially in areas that can contribute most to meeting the problems of today, or help yield higher dividends for the country as a whole — in the training, for example, of more management men, engineers, scientists, agriculturists, technicians and vocational graduates. The student demonstrations have shown where we can start. Let us consider giving the students incentives by:

1. Lowering the tuition fees wherever possible and charging more reasonable prices for the food served at school canteens.

2. Improving library facilities and exerting greater effort to meet the textbook shortage.

3. Employing more competent teachers and professors by offering better pay and giving other inducements as will discourage the "brain drain" that has affected adversely the professions and vital business enterprises.

4. Granting to students rights and privileges as are compatible with the prerogatives of their school's management, but asking of them in return to observe discipline and to recognize their responsibilities to society.

So let there be reforms in the educational system, in the body politic, and in our society, as has been clamored. But let there be discipline and restraint too in the exercise of the so-called "student power." Otherwise the movement that has started in the campuses might turn into chaos and anarchy in the streets, beyond anyone's control, even by the students, themselves.

A tempest in the teapot.

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By S. P. Bigay

PMAIL

Dear Sir:

I am an avid reader of newspapers, both local and national. I buy the provincial papers because they provide me with local news and the national publications for the variety of information of national interest they offer.

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Congratulations.

RAUL B. RAYMUNDO
Lingayen, Pangasinan

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Long live PM.

ROWENA V. CERVANIA
Davao City

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