

## THE CASE FOR AUTONOMY FOR PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

*(Continued from the January 1967 Issue)*

But it is strange that in 1917, when both houses of the Philippine Legislature were already in the hands of the Filipinos, Act No. 2706 was passed providing for compulsory inspection of private schools and colleges by the Department of Public Instruction. Still the law did not require a person to secure a permit for the opening of a private school. Uncritical and nearsighted observers considered this omission a defect of the system and in their minds was responsible for the poor education and instruction produced in private schools. Could they have clearly anticipated its future effects, they would not have been naive enough to believe that permits by themselves can produce superior private instruction or guarantee a high standard of education.

At any rate in 1925, the Monroe Board of Educational Survey in its report recommended legislation "to prohibit the opening of any school by an individual or organization without the permission of the Secretary of Public Instruction." It suggested that certain conditions be fulfilled before such permission should be granted. Among them are possession of adequate buildings, classroom facilities, and library and laboratory apparatus, observance of a standard size of classes, the employment of teachers with qualifications equal to those in public schools, efficiency of instruction, the maintenance of a moral and intellectual tone to be determined by a "rigid, thorough-

going, sympathetic inspection", and a system of annual reporting to the Secretary of Public Instruction about the school's conditions.

The Monroe Report particularly stressed the necessity of an adequate staff in the Department of Public Instruction to be composed of "men and women who have the scholastic, professional, and personal attainments" to make the proposed supervision effective and sensible. It added that the Department at that time did not have that kind of staff, but it warned that "an adequate staff does not necessarily mean a large and expensive staff. It does mean one composed of persons familiar with modern methods of school administration, and not content to do their work as a mere matter of form, but filled with a zeal to make the entire educational system of the country a great force in its progress and welfare."

At this juncture one may ask the following: (1) What were the conditions of the private schools at that time which in the opinion of the Monroe Board should justify the approval of legislation to prohibit the opening of private schools without permit and to impose upon them certain necessary requirements for their maintenance and continuance? (2) Are the conditions of present schools exactly similar to those then existing or have they deteriorated or improved? (3) Setting aside for the moment the constitutional problem involved in the matter, has the Department of Education followed the suggestion in the Report that only persons who are intellectually, professionally, and individually competent, should be employed in its staff of inspectors, doing their work not as a matter of form but with zeal to make the entire educational system of the country a great force for national progress and welfare?

These three questions are not simple or easy but they need to be explained and answered in the best way possible. As to the first question, the Monroe Report furnishes some data upon which it based its recommendation for denying to the individual or organization the right to open a school without a government permit. Among them are the following: (1) No law or regulation then existed which would prevent a person "disqualified by ignorance, greed, or even immoral character from opening a school." (2) Almost all private schools were intended for profit without attention to the health and sanitary conditions in their location, buildings, classrooms. (3) Their heads had little, if any, knowledge of the science of education, their teachers were not familiar with modern teaching methods, and their textbooks were always old and uninteresting. (4) The private high schools were mere "cram" schools and were in worse locations and sanitary conditions than the elementary schools. (5) Physical training was unknown to them, and sports and games were non-existent. (6) The equipment of the high schools "was ridiculous" and not one of those the Monroe group visited had a library of a thousand volumes. (7) The laboratory for biology and physics was "hopelessly inadequate in almost every instance," a large school with hundreds of students having but one microscope and a shelf of bottles containing insects, fishes, and other specimens liberally covered with dust. (8) Teachers exhibited "complete ignorance of any pedagogic principles of teaching," most of them were not professionally interested in their work, and the great majority of them were part-time teachers. (9) The schools could not present any budget where one could see how much was set aside for apparatus and equipment. (10) In Manila itself, the colleges and universities had no buildings of their own except Manila

University, the National University having only began to erect one of its own; their classrooms were crowded, badly ventilated, poorly lighted; and their science laboratories were bad caricatures of the real thing. Far Eastern College had a library of only 630 volumes; Manila University had 1,318 volumes; and National University had 3,255 volumes. (11) In the private colleges and universities in Manila, practically all faculty members were part-time teachers, none doing more than 11 hours of teaching a week, and none had any committee or administrative work for the college.

The conclusion of the Monroe Report, therefore, states the following: "The great majority of them (the private schools) from primary grade to university are money-making devices for the profit of those who organize and administer them. The people whose children and youth attend them are not getting what they pay for. It is obvious that the system constitutes a great evil. That it should be permitted to exist with almost no supervision is indefensible. The suggestion has been made with reference to the private institutions of university grade that some board of control be organized under legislative control to supervise their administration." This conclusion was followed by the recommendation mentioned above: That there be created a supervisory staff of highly competent educators with superior educational, scholastic, and administrative qualifications filled with a zeal to help develop a system that could be a positive force for the advancement of the country.

As to private schools run by the Catholic priests and Protestant missionaries; the Monroe Commission exempted them from some of the adverse criticisms directed against the Filipino secular institutions; and it singled out a few of them as deserving praise for having qualified teachers, good buildings, classrooms,

equipment, and laboratory and library facilities. The Report declared that these sectarian schools had "no commercial taint attached to them and hence few of the unpleasant physical features that characterize the private (secular) schools at present." A library of 8,000 volumes in one of them was given a special mention.

Strangely enough the explanation of the weakness and defects of the private schools at that time may be gathered from the pages of the Monroe Report itself. A careful perusal of the brief description of the background of those schools as presented in that monumental work supplemented with some facts pertaining to the history of the times will suffice to demonstrate this assertion. Furthermore, the public school system itself suffered from defects which also gave rise to strong criticisms in the same Report. These points appear quite clearly when we analyze them with some degree of attention and understanding.

First of all, and as mentioned in the Monroe Report, the then existing private colleges in the early years of American occupation of the country were largely influenced by Spanish cultural ideas and educational practices. In fact, they were at first using Spanish as the principal language of instruction. This condition had to be expected as they were established and managed by Filipinos educated in the colleges in Manila during the Spanish regime or in Spain. One of their chief aims was to preserve and develop the spirit of nationalism which had been generated by the Filipino leaders and intellectuals who had been reared in an atmosphere of Spanish culture and civilization. The very names of many colleges were Spanish, such as Instituto Burgos, Liceo de Manila, Colegio Mercantil, Instituto de Manila, Centro Escolar de Señoritas, Instituto de Mujeres, Instituto Filipino, Colegio de Derecho, Academia de Leyes, and others of the same

class and purpose. It was only after a few years that they realized that Spanish training was no longer widely marketable under the newly established American era in which most jobs and occupations were made available only to those who had learned English and had acquired some sort of American culture and education. They then decided to begin adopting in some form the American system of instruction as practiced in the public schools. Not having had a background of education and training of the American style, the heads and teachers of these Filipino schools knew almost next to nothing about the more modern educational methods and standards. That was not an easy problem for them to solve immediately but in their desire to adjust themselves to the new situation they tried to look for new teachers with knowledge of English and as a proof of their decision to modernize in their own way they dropped the Spanish and used English names for their colleges such as National Academy, Lyceum of Manila, Far Eastern College, Philippine Women's College, and a few years later, National University, and Manila University.

The difficulty of securing new teachers with proper qualifications was felt not only by the private but also by the public schools. There were very few qualified ones available. The Monroe Report states that in 1924 there were only 787 teachers in the public high schools in the country; and of these, 214 were Americans and 573 were Filipinos. The Report commented that "the teachers in the regular (government) high school are not trained for their job. Approximately 18 per cent of them have received but four years or less of training beyond the intermediate school." About 33 per cent have had an education equivalent to graduation from a four-year college. As to professional training, 68 per cent of them "had no professional work in education, however meager, in

high school, normal school, college or university." Most of them were inexperienced, their average teaching experience was less than 3 years.

These deficiencies were naturally present in the private schools at that time which had no means of recruiting American teachers or Filipino instructors of the caliber of those employed in the government institutions who were mostly below standard academically and professionally as pointed out above. But as we shall soon find out, our private educational institutions have not stagnated.

In his book *The Philippines* published in 1945, Dr. Joseph R. Hayden tells us that the criticisms in the Monroe Report resulted in the enactment of laws and regulations placing the private schools under strict regulations and subjecting them to close supervision by agencies under the Department of Public Instruction. Then he makes this noteworthy remark: "By 1929, the schools which had brought discredit upon the reputation of private education had either been eliminated or been brought up to standards of equipment, instruction, and administration which were comparable with those of public schools. As a result of these accomplishments, private education as a whole was rehabilitated in the eyes of the public." Unfortunately, the chapter on Private Education in his book is not quite clear in its discussion of what he considered to be the development of the conditions of private schools that it is difficult to determine what his conclusions are about their advancement or their stagnation by 1941 when the War broke out. But as Secretary of Public Instruction till November, 1935, Dr. Hayden's words as quoted above indicate that the conditions of the private schools 5 or 6 years after the Monroe survey had markedly changed for the better and were no longer deserving of the criticisms cast against them in the past.

Dr. Hayden seems to be as unfamiliar with American court decisions on freedom of education as were the members of the Monroe Mission. The latter, however, could not have been expected to realize that when they suggested *legislative control* over the private schools and their activities they were disregarding or violating the principle of the liberty of the teaching profession and of the natural right of parents to educate their children for civic efficiency and other obligations as declared by the Supreme Court of their country at about the time they prepared their monumental report. But that lack of knowledge was understandable, though not excusable, in view of the fact that all of them were only professors of Education and could not be expected to have some grasp of constitutional law; in fact, one or two of them were suspected as having leftist leanings.

But Dr. Hayden was a political scientist, and so he should not have overlooked the traditional principle that the individual, not the State, is the central figure in a democracy. Nevertheless, he made the following statement: "In harmony with the principle that individual interests should be subordinated to those of the State, the Constitution of 1935 provided that 'all educational institutions shall be under the supervision of and subject to regulation by the State'." Apparently, he considered this brief sentence in the Constitution as authorizing not merely regulation but *control* over private schools and need not be read in connection with the substantive provisions on education to be found in other parts of the Constitution. He took it as standing apart from the context, independent of other constitutional mandates affecting education and individual freedom. In this he committed a serious error which he could have avoided if he had kept himself abreast of the authoritative pro-



nouncements of the Supreme Court of the United States on the subject of education and individual freedom. But here again Dr. Hayden appeared to be no longer aware of the existence of state control over private schools when he says: "Both sectarian and non-sectarian institutions in many instances are taking advantage of *their freedom from state control* to adapt themselves more readily than government schools can to modern trends in education and to changing local educational needs. Through the secondary level, at any rate, the private schools are free to set higher standards than the Bureau of Education, which is limited by the capability of the average child; and some of them have taken advantage of this opportunity." At any rate, these words of one who was once Secretary of Public Instruction show that in general private schools had improved to the extent that they were already "taking advantage of their freedom from state control."

In relation to the general evaluation of private schools given in the Monroe Report of 1924-1925, the observations of Dr. Hayden, the last American Secretary of Public Instruction, show that a marked improvement of the educational work and the conditions of the private institutions of the country had taken place before the War or about 12 to 15 years after the Monroe survey had been undertaken.

A statistical comparison of the conditions of the private educational institutions at different periods may also give us a good picture of improvements which are objectively measurable. In 1924, the total enrollment of private schools recognized by the Government was 73,246. The population of the country then was about 11,000,000. As stated in Dr. Hayden's book, in 1938 the number of students in the private schools reached a total of 130,000. There were then 425 pri-

vate schools. In 1964-1965, the annual report of the Director of Private Schools shows a total enrollment of 1,379,868 students out of a population of over 32,000,000 people. In about 26 years, therefore, the ratio of the increase of the student population in the private schools was more than 10 times while that of the country's total population was hardly 3 times. The number of college and university students alone was 390,454. There were 4,393 private schools from the kindergarten to the university level. In the collegiate and university level alone, there were 463 institutions of which 26 were universities.

The amount and extent of assistance these private institutions have given the government and the people of the country have been literally enormous. As far back as the year 1932, the Commissioner of Private Education calculated that if the government then had to provide the education for the students in the recognized private schools, it would have appropriated at least ₱10,750,886 a year without including the cost of buildings and equipment. Dr. Hayden commented that "in addition to relieving the government of an appreciable proportion of the financial burden of education, the private institutions of learning are making a distinctive contribution to the intellectual life of the nation."

According to the annual report of the Director of Private Schools for 1965-1966, the private secondary schools alone would have cost the government if it had operated them from ₱21,356,055 to ₱170,864,563 on the basis of the wide-ranging cost per student in different public high schools, or an average of about ₱96,000,000. These figures do not include the cost of buildings and equipment. The same report states that more than 80 per cent of the college students

of the country are in private institutions of higher education. In the academic year 1964-1965, the total number of college and university graduates from private institutions was 67,359. The degrees they received were in practically all careers and professions including agriculture, science, technology, medicine, law, teacher training, liberal arts, philosophy, fine arts, nursing, etc. The biggest enrolment was in teaching, followed by commerce and business administration.

These facts reveal more than mere quantitative growth of our private colleges and universities. A comparative study of both academic and professional achievements of their graduates as against those who have completed their courses in public secondary schools and colleges is certain to disclose a marked improvement of the quality of the products of the former. In most professions and areas of intellectual work, the average public school product is far from being superior to the private college graduate.

Given more freedom and encouragement to the spirit of initiative and creativity by the removal of government control on their academic activities and decisions, private educational institutions may reasonably be expected to pursue excellence in their work.

Let us remember that the tradition of higher education in this country has its roots in the American system, a system based on diversity and liberty. We have deliberately ignored that precious tradition and for this reason our educational growth has been stunted. In the report on *Higher Education in a Decade of Decision* issued by the Educational Policies Commission of two outstanding American educational associations, the following statements descriptive of the reasons of the excellence of higher education in the United States appear:

"One of the strengths of the American enterprise in higher education is variety in the source of authority and responsibility for colleges and universities. There is *no monolithic structure* of control in American higher education, no central source of power. Among the nation's 1855 institutions of higher education are public and private institutions, some church-related and others secular in control, some locally and others state controlled, and a very few federally controlled. Although some institutions are grouped in state systems and others grouped within the framework of religious denominations, to a considerable extent each institution is an independent unit, master of its own policy, with its own structure of loyalties, customs, and control." — V. G. S.