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# Did They Tell the People?

John R. Wilson: Secretary, American Chamber of Commerce

Now that the elections are over will someone please tell us what they were all about? One party was "anti" and the other "pro"; just what were the "antis" against and the "pros" for? As far as the innocent bystander can figure out the whole thing was a war of personalities. Neither party could promise anything. Their future line of conduct is too clearly outlined in the Hawes-Cutting and Tydings-McDuffie bills. Call these bills whatever you please, they are still the same thing as far as future Philippine prosperity is concerned.

Did the candidates of either or any party tell the electorate of the misery that is to come? Did they tell them that tens of thousands of sugar laborers will be without work this year and years to come?

What about our copra industry? Were the copra producers and laborers told fully about what a generous congress did to them; that they levied an excise tax equivalent to 200% of the present price of oil? Even the President of the United States was powerless to have this tax eliminated. United States congressmen demonstrated their fear of the electorate. How long will it be before the Philippine electorate will demand of their elected representatives the same obedience?

What about abaca? Up until about twenty years ago this industry was confined to a few districts of Luzon, the islands of Samar and Leyte and was completely in the hands of Filipinos. Did any of the candidates tell the producers in these districts that the control of this commodity has passed into the hands of foreigners who are raising superior abaca in other districts? Filipino labor is not benefiting by this change, even the field work is done by nationals of the foreign producers. Reports from Leyte are to the effect that laborers in that province are actually working for 10 centavos a day, some for 5 centavos and some for scanty food only. Leyte has a population of 800,000 and no one will deny that the potential power of such a mass of people is not to be trifled with.

Did our candidates tell the embroidery industry that before independence is an accomplished fact their means of livelihood will have disappeared? Embroideries rank fifth in our list of exports. In 1932 we exported over 6½ million pesos worth. In 1933 the value was only about 3½ million pesos. Foreign countries are making inroads into our exports of this commodity. The only thing that holds us any part of the market is our free-trade privilege with the United States. What are these women going to say when they can express their views through the ballot-box?

Have our politicians told the people that foreign fishermen are driving our own people off our own waters and are monopolizing the fishing industry? How can they explain the fact that there is not stricter supervision of this natural resource?

Did they tell them that public improvements must cease and that our present good roads will deteriorate to the point of impassibility?

Did they tell them that schools will close and education be curtailed?

Did they tell them that the transition period of supposedly 10 years is too short a time for a people to change from a life of prosperity to one of peonage?

Did they tell the people who is going to be responsible to the people when the predicted calamity becomes a reality?

Did they give the real reason why the feverish haste to organize the commonwealth government?

Some of them did talk about finding new markets for our sugar and copra products, but such arguments fall flat on the minds of those who have taken the trouble to study the matter. China is the big market to which the spellbinders always refer. It might be of interest to them to know that long before the United States market is entirely closed to Philippine sugar China will be producing every ounce of sugar it consumes and at a price so low that even Java will not be able to compete. Sugar mills are now being erected in China and there are more to follow.

There is a lot of talk about industrializing the Philippines, but so far no one has come forward with any feasible suggestion. Just what might we manufacture in the Philippines that is not already being produced in quantities sufficient to meet the local demands? Just what does the Philippines produce that cannot be produced cheaper and better in neighboring countries? Stop feeding the people with a lot of ethereal impossibilities. It would be safer to tell them the truth.

There is one consolation for the successful candidates; they promised nothing, therefore they are not to be held responsible for broken promises.

It is believed that everyone will admit that the candidates did not tell the things mentioned in this memorandum. It is not too late however for them to tell the truth and by so doing help the cause of the Philippine people. Filipino leaders in every walk of life should, without reservation, be honest and tell the masses what they may expect. It is only by enlisting the confidence of the *tao* that the situation may be served. They are due this confidence and if it is not given freely and honestly they will eventually exact retribution.

The future of the Philippines is not in the hands of the Filipinos. There are stronger forces shaping the destiny of these islands. The fruits of the islands will not accrue to the natives but principally to industrious foreigners unless acts are substituted for mere words. All we can ask is that God will have mercy on those guilty of the sins of omission when the *taos* realize their hopeless plight.