

# PRESIDENTIAL TABLE TALK

By MARCELINO BAUTISTA



1. We are definitely on the move to make the organization of public school teachers assume importance in making its wishes recognized. The recent "STRIKE" of Nueva Ecija High School teachers, as well as the recent "investigation" of the teacher in Pavia, Iloilo who allegedly did not allow her class to meet the President have caused electric chills in the thought processes of people everywhere. These two events have been viewed with considerable ALARM by the authorities, and justifiably so, for these have been "challenges" against constituted authority. Hundreds of teachers have been gripped by the grim possibility that the teachers concerned might be disciplined ("dismissed" was the word used in the press releases coming from the President, in the case of Cabanatuan), and then the holocaust might have descended upon otherwise passive, placid, and uncomplaining school people everywhere.

2. But we are not going to strike in order to get what we want, and we are not going to be deliberately disrespectful. We shall get what we want through the usual legal processes. It is just a matter of bringing to the attention of authorities concerned what the schools want and what the teachers need. This is the reason for the existence of our Association. We shall make the President listen; we shall make Congress listen; we shall make all other authorities concerned listen to a presentation of facts regarding the anaemic school system that we have and the plight of the teachers.

3. There are four good reasons why teachers should not strike. First, when

we entered the government service and expressed our acceptance of government terms, we took an oath of office which states among other things that "I will well and faithfully discharge to the best of my ability the duties of my present position and of all others I may hereafter hold under the Republic of the Philippines; that I will support and defend the Constitution of the Philippines; and that I will obey the laws, legal orders, and decrees promulgated by the duly constituted authorities of the Republic of the Philippines" . . . All that this oath means is that we shall recourse only to legal and orderly processes in order to get what we want. We shall be orderly and we shall be obedient.

Second, as government employees we are bound by civil service rules which require, among other things, that a procedure be followed in petitioning authorities concerned for redress of grievances. The petition should be coured properly and we should be bound by whatever decisions are promulgated by the authorities concerned.

Third, if we are members of the Philippine Public School Teachers Association, we are bound by its rules and regulations not to use the strike as a means of getting what we want. In its convention last January the Association adopted a resolution to the effect that we shall not resort to strikes because we are not of the nature of the labor unions. The resolution, however, does not indicate that we shall not be militant.

Fourth, the teaching profession is generally regarded as a missionary work and as some kind of apostleship. Those of us who have entered teaching as a career did so with eyes wide open be-

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ing fully aware beforehand that we cannot expect to be well off financially while in the teaching service of the government. We cannot argue, for this very reason, that the teaching profession is underpaid and that therefore teachers should strike.

Fifth, we must consider not only the teachers' welfare but also that of the students, when we are thinking of going on a strike. This matter is not a one-sided affair. It does not concern the teachers' welfare only; there is the pupils and the students' welfare to consider. When teachers go on a strike, they are stopping the functioning of the classes. It must be borne in mind that education cannot be delayed. Every minute and every hour of the day, education must go on. It goes on even without teachers, because the individual child or adult learns something whenever he goes through an experience. But it is directed learning that we want for our children. And so schooling cannot be delayed.

There is one decent thing that teachers can do if they feel that they are not getting enough material rewards from teaching, and that is for them to leave the service. But when they do decide to leave the service, they should do so in the most honorable manner. They should indicate their desire to resign months ahead of the day of quitting so that the authorities concerned can look for teachers who will replace them. It is not honorable for any teacher to say, "Tomorrow, if you do not grant what I want, I leave." Give the authorities concerned a chance to make the necessary adjustments so that the education of the children will not be jeopardized.

4. I have heard this statement from teachers: What do I get by joining the PPSTA? The question should be asked in the reverse: What do I not get if I do not join the PPSTA? The tea-

cher will miss a great deal of the feeling of satisfaction derived from work well done and from having contributed something toward the attainment of certain goals. A united body of teachers will have better chances of achieving something which they could not do if they were not united. It seems that what should be foremost in the mind of each teacher is not what he expects to get from the Association; rather it should be what he should contribute to the Association so that it can get what it aims to achieve. If any teacher feels that he does not need the Association to improve his lot, let me assure that teacher that the Association needs him.

5. If we understand the educational authorities right, the new policy seems to be to have the teachers help themselves, meaning that, with the limited funds of the government, there will be less and less substantial help to teachers from the government. This is the reason for the Secretary of Instruction being so much interested in the organization of the Teachers' National Cooperatives.

While it may seem necessary that the government should expect the teachers to look into ways and means of helping themselves, that is, of improving their material well-being through their own efforts, it also seems necessary that the people themselves be given the chance to say whether or not any material help can be expected from them to improve the teachers' welfare. This is why we are most anxious that if Congress is afraid to pass the proposed bill revising the Educational Act of 1940, Congress should refer it to the people for their decision. We are of the opinion that the people are more than willing to give substantial aid to their schools in the form of a school tax. They are actually doing this now through the <sup>Parent</sup> ~~Philippine~~ Teachers' Associations.