

YOUTH PROGRAM

Beyond the classroom

Something funny happened at the launching of the summer Youth Civic Action Program (YCAP) two weeks ago. At once, the pictures taken of the activity told the whole, and only a part, of the story. The whole, from the limited view of the launching itself; and just a part of it, since the YCAP embraces students at all levels.

Obviously, however, it was the very young who had the run of the show. Wielding brooms and spades, grade-school children of the public schools in Greater Manila heartily took to the task of adding luster to relatively well-kept city streets. Impressed by the response, Undersecretary Narciso Albarracin of the Department of Education and Culture concluded that the day's activity was generally a success. But he had to temper his elation with the observation that the response of universities and colleges in Greater Manila was "rather weak and unimpressive."

The observation of the DEC undersecretary was quite understandable, considering that over 90 percent of the total college population is in private schools and many of these schools are in Greater Manila. Besides, more than the grade-school children, the summer YCAP will affect the collegians with greater immediacy. More particularly for college juniors,

participation in the summer YCAP will spell the difference between getting their diplomas in time or not. The DEC has ruled through Department Order No. 53, issued on December 29, 1972, that college juniors have to put in a minimum of 120 hours of civic action prior to graduation. This new prerequisite takes affect beginning next school-year (1973-'74) so that even college seniors expecting to graduate by the end of the first semester are not exempt from it. Neither are foreign nationals; nor those who are married. For compelling reasons, like an army draft or serious illness, a student may ask for deferment until the next summer YCAP. Heads of schools, however, may exempt working students on a case to case basis, according to the Bureau of Private Schools.

The summer YCAP involves more than just the cleaning of yards and streets. The DEC emphasizes food production in this year's program of activities. It has also suggested three broad areas of civic action for college students: (1) orientation of the community to the goals of the New Society, (2) environmental sanitation and beautification, and (3) solution of community problems, like drug addiction and population control.

School authorities themselves have to determine what particular projects their students will undertake. As far as possible, schools are urged to fit individual inclinations, talents and disciplines of students to particular projects. A Physical Education major, for instance, may be asked to organize a sports program for the community; or, an Education major may conduct a class in adult education. In the field, school authorities are enjoined to exercise "the diligence of a good father to prevent danger" to their students.

Credit for participation in the YCAP need not be earned exclusively from participation in YCAP activities of the school where a student is enrolled. Should the student elect to do it in his hometown, he may do so and be credited for it provided he can present a certificate to the effect with the proper validation of any of these officials: the elementary or high school principal, the district supervisor, the superintendent of schools, the area supervisor or the project consultant of the YCAP.

While the summer YCAP is primarily designed for college juniors, college freshmen and sophomores are not barred from participation. They may earn advance credit for such participation. Students of secondary and primary schools are also encouraged to join on a voluntary basis. Teachers in the public schools whose services are needed to coordinate or supervise the activities will be given service credits for it too.

The summer activities are not all there is to the YCAP, though. As early as the reopening of classes after the Christmas break, in January, the YCAP had already become an integral part of elementary and high school curricula. Depending on the subject being taught, teachers now either plan their lessons around community problems or lead their students in undertaking civic projects. In certain cases, some schools have adopted the 50-50 formula where students devote half of their time to academics and the rest to actual civic action.

Definitely there are still many rough edges that have to be smoothened in the implementation of the YCAP. Many of them are but to be expected in the initial stages of any program.

Nonetheless, even at this early stage, some things already mark it out as a major reform strategy. A rundown of the objectives of the YCAP sheds light on some of them:

- "To imbue the youth with social and civic consciousness and social responsibility;

- "To involve the youth in the development of their communities;

- "To give more meaning to school experience through the actual application of learnings in the solution of community problems;

- "To guide the youth in forming a more realistic perspective of life."

In sum, the YCAP is expected to introduce relevance and meaning to the educational system. By seeing for themselves and working on solutions to community problems, students will have a clear picture of the conditions in the community and, ultimately, the country and will be better prepared to discharge the functions of citizenship.

The YCAP is only the first step along this line. In his recent speech before the graduating class of the Philippine Military Academy, President Marcos has hinted that other programs of a similar nature will be implemented in the near future. Seniors in different courses will be sent to the rural areas and young professionals will be required to serve the poorer areas through a National Youth Service, according to the President.

In the final analysis, programs of this kind will redound to the mutual benefit of those who serve as well as those who are served. More so the former. As the President put it: "The young professionals themselves will be the ones most benefited because they will develop a new moral and spiritual dimension in their lives as Filipinos and as servants of mankind."

JORGE V. ARUTA



Students cleaning the streets: a sense of community participation.

FULBRIGHT PROGRAM

A bridge of understanding

It has been said that one of the functions of education is to provide a bridge of understanding between people of diverse political, economic and cultural backgrounds. One project that has been successful in building that bridge is the Fulbright Program in the Philippines, which marked its silver jubilee celebration late last month.

This program, established on March 23, 1948, is one of the first of the educational exchanges between the United States and more than a hundred other countries. It was named after Senator William H. Fulbright, principal sponsor of the bill which became US Public Law 524. It is administered by binational foundations or commissions, jointly composed of representatives of the US and the co-sponsoring countries. In the Philippines, the implementing arm of the program — the United States Educational Foundation in the Philippines — was officially established in

1948, by virtue of an agreement signed by then US Ambassador Emmet O'Neal and then Vice President (later President) Quirino.

Since then, for a quarter of a century, about 2,000 Filipino and American scholars, professors and researchers have been exchanged between the two countries. Although the promotion of mutual understanding remains as the primary goal of the program, academic excellence is a major factor in the selection of participants.

The bulk of the grants made available thus far to Filipinos, is in the field of education with a total of 137, followed by the medical sciences and engineering which totalled 90, social sciences with 89, and language and communication arts with 84. The pursuit of the different disciplines was made in 131 American institutions of higher learning.

The Fulbright Program has played a

significant role in the training of outstanding professional men and women in the country. For instance, approximately 25 percent of the recipients of the awards for The Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) of the Philippines since the annual selection was launched in 1959 are former Fulbright grantees. Many of the recognized leaders of various professional fields in the country today pursued their advanced professional studies under this program. Among those who have been Fulbright grantees, to name only a few, are the present chairman of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), a former secretary of education, four bureau directors and ten superintendents of schools, six presidents of universities and colleges, 15 college vice presidents and 45 deans or heads of academic departments, three presidents of business corporations, seven executive directors, three newspaper editors, one district judge and one senator.

NEDA Director General Gerardo P. Sicat, one of the participants in this program, says that, "from both the quantitative and qualitative angles," the program has made a substantial contribution "to the national development of our country."

The program, however, has not

been a one-way affair. While many Filipinos have gone to the US on Fulbright fellowships, a substantial number of American scholars have also come to the Philippines to teach or pursue further studies. The American scholars not only engaged in their fields of specialization like the teaching of English, sociology, education, agriculture, child education, political science, public health, anthropology, economics, international relations, biology, geology, history, drama and the theater, but also familiarized themselves with Filipino culture and national problems. Thus, in the words of Mr. Sicat, "they returned to the United States with a wider perspective of our country as a whole."

President Marcos, in a message on the 25th anniversary of the program, said he was happy to note "that periodic reassessments and measures adopted to strengthen the Philippine Fulbright Program toward the realization of its primary goal of promoting international understanding have equally emphasized the critical needs of our country's development." For his part, US Ambassador Henry A. Byroade said the "need for cultural and educational cross-fertilization is unending."