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grading of skills. During the fiscal year 1969-1970, 3,874 industrial workers were trained.

This training helped in the promotion of these workers and in increasing their salaries. Moreover, as a consequence of the promotions, vacancies were created, giving job openings to the unemployed.

By definition of law, manpower from the out-of-school youth group falls between the ages of 12 and 17 years. As such, these young people are still practically unacceptable to industrial establishments. What was fashioned for them was a cooperative system of "bayanihan" integrated skills program aimed mainly at the development of agricultural skills and skills needed for cottage industries.

At present, the NMYC is conducting two "bayanihan" youth settlement programs. One is in Negros Occidental where 15 youth recently graduated from a one-year training in various agricultural skills like sugar technology, rice and corn culture, vegetable raising and animal hus-

bandry.

In several barrios in Pampanga, where a home industry project was launched in 1971 — also in line with the "bayanihan" integrated skills training program — the NMYC revealed that 86 percent of its training graduates were able to find means of self-employment and were able to earn an aggregate income of P12,600 from their various projects, including hog and poultry raising, rice farming and vegetable production.

Giving the NMYC program a big boost is the completion of the multi-million-peso National Manpower Skills Center in Taguig, Rizal. This complex construction represented the counterpart of the Philippine government under the RP-United Nations Development Program-International Labor Organization agreement. The UNDP and ILO provided \$200,000 worth of machinery and equipment.

It started full operations last January 15, with the first 80 trainees enrolling in machine fitting, automotive mechanics, electronics and electricity. The training will last from

six to eight months, after which they will undergo an on-the-job training in selected industries where they might later be employed.

The NMYC is also putting up 10 regional manpower training centers in key industrial regions of Northern Luzon, Central Luzon, Bicol, East Visayas, West Visayas, East Mindanao and West Mindanao.

Since the proclamation of martial law, the NMYC has undergone a self-evaluation of its programs with the view to giving them added momentum. Now, it is centering its program implementation on three principal areas, namely: manpower assessment and planning, projects operations, and establishment of additional institutions for effective development and utilization of manpower resources.

Among the long list of activities under these three principal areas, perhaps the most outstanding is the implementation of a restructured manpower training program. Findings showed that only 60 percent of the training graduates had been actually absorbed for gainful occupation. To

raise the level of efficiency, several measures have been adopted, including an increase in the number of training hours, the revamp of the instructional materials by employing a method used in Europe and the United States called "training modules," aptitude testing in the recruitment of trainees, the employment of trade test standards, and the exclusion in the curriculum of so-called soft trades like dressmaking, hairdressing, cosmetology and the like and concentration instead on higher technical skills needed by industry and agriculture.

Also part of these activities is the construction skills training project of the NMYC in conjunction with the Export Processing Zone Authority in Mariveles, Bataan. One hundred jobless adults have so far received training at the trade zone training center. Additional workers are at present undergoing training in construction skills while another group of trainees are engaged in shoe manufacturing.

LUIS P. VENERACION

TOWN FIESTAS

Tradition as a tool for growth

Early last month, the Department of Local Government and Community Development issued a circular to all local officials to transmute lavish fiestas into agro-industrial fairs and other meaningful activities. This was in line with a presidential edict issued shortly after the proclamation of martial law enjoining all citizens to avoid and prevent ostentatious display of wealth and extravagance, including the holding of fiestas and other festivities.

Fiestas are indeed costly affairs. On the average, a barrio (of which there are now 33,827 in the Philippines) spends around P500 for its annual fiesta. This is a conservative figure and does not include the expenses in city and town fiestas, which can be far more lavish. In any case, barrio expenses add up to quite a substantial sum: P16,913,500. Such amount, if spent for the construction of irrigation systems, fertilizer, and tractors, can mean untold benefits in terms of increased agricultural production.

In response to the government call, many cities, municipalities and barrios have been harnessing the "fiesta spirit" for progress in agriculture, industry, and even culture. Last month, according to the Philippines News Agency, at least three cities, four provinces, and 22 towns held agro-industrial fairs under mini expositions to replace the lavish fiestas of the past. In Caloocan City, at least 50 industrial firms participated in an exposition held at the athletic grounds of the city high school. An average of 2,000 persons visit the fair each day. In Marikina, the country's shoe capital, more than 30 industrial firms are participating in a cultural and industrial fair. Paranaque, a few minutes drive from Manila International Airport, is also holding its own fair to redirect the people's enthusiasm and energies towards the enhancement of



Farm products at the agro-industrial fair: a change from lavish fiestas.

local business.

Apart from the government call for austere celebrations, what has made the spirit of the agro-industrial fair catch on? One of the main reasons is the success of the "Green Revolution" in the cities, towns, and barrios. The agro-industrial fair has provided an outlet for the people to display what they have produced, such as the longest "upo," the biggest pig, the largest carp, the most beautiful handbag and other outstanding products.

This and other trends may not mean the abolition of the fiesta altogether but, rather, its being redirected towards social growth and economic development.

The idea is to harness a long-established institution in shaping a new society responsive to the needs of the masses. Thus, in some communities today, there are moves to pool the contributions they usually chip in for fiestas and to invest the amount in some communal project or enterprise.

Mayor Osmundo de Guzman of Marikina said that "aside from finding ready market for products of agriculture and industry, the agro-industrial fairs have encouraged our people to

improve the quality of their products."

Another example of a fiesta as an instrument of growth was the one held in Taytay, Rizal, last month. During the town fiesta, different barrios put up agricultural and industrial exhibits. Among the products exhibited were handicrafts, ornamental cases, embroidery items, kitchen utensils, bags, trinkets and trays. All sectors of the community were involved, and the proceeds were to be plowed back into the community through various projects.

"The success of the fair was not only in terms of the profit realized but more so in the realization of the people that they have so much to be proud of in terms of products and potentials," Taytay Mayor Benjamin B. Esguerra said.

Fiestas cum mini-fairs can also be directed towards the promotion of tourism. An example was Kalibo, Aklan which held a fair last January. The provincial and municipal governments joined hands in making the annual ati-atihan festival more useful for Aklan's tourism industry.

Other places which have held agro-

industrial fairs include Jaen, Nueva Ecija; Mandaue City and Talibon, Bohol, both in Eastern Visayas.

"For years," Kalibo Mayor Icamina said, "we had been celebrating the ati-atihan, and all we did was spend so much money without getting anything in return. But this year, we fully tapped our fiesta to derive some profits for our people and for our government coffers."

According to Mayor Icamina, Kalibo attracted more tourists this year with the sprucing up of several hotels and boarding houses to accommodate revelers from other parts of the country. He said there also was a brisk sale of locally made products.

Other towns, cities, and provinces can learn from such example.

There is much to gain from fiestas being geared toward socio-economic uplift. With more initiative, ingenuity and imagination on the part of the officials and with the full cooperation of the people, what used to be a purely religious tradition can be tapped fully for the country's development.

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