

■ What is wrong with the way the native Filipino language is now being developed as a national language? This article gives an answer.

NATIONAL LANGUAGE LAW

The development of the national language by the National Language Institute was assailed recently by Jorge B. Vargas, former executive secretary, as a violation of the Constitution, and "a reversion to the practices of the Dark Ages."

In a letter to MADYAAS Pro-Hiligaynon Society, Inc., a cultural, non-profit association of civic leaders from West Visayas, Vargas said that President Quezon, a Tagalog, wanted to build up "an acceptable common Filipino national language, not by inventing fantastic Tagalog words and phrases, but by enriching basic Tagalog with infusions from the other developed Filipino dialects like Hiligaynon, Cebuano, Bicol, Pampango, Samareño and Ilocano," Vargas said.

The former Malacañang official, who was known before the war as the Little President because he was

practically left by Quezon to run administrative affairs in the Palace, joined the Madyaas Society as a charter member.

He said he is ready to assist in all efforts to carry out the projects of the association, specially in the development of the national language according to the provision and spirit of the Constitution.

In his letter to Severino, president of MADYAAS Pro-Hiligaynon Society, Inc., Vargas traced the government efforts in the development of the national language, and bewailed that the institute today has departed from the original concept of the farmers of the Constitution.

He said: "As a first step in this direction, President Quezon appointed a Visayan, an ex-Supreme Court justice, Norberto Romualdez, as the first chairman of the Natio-

nal Language Institute. When Justice Romualdez retired, Quezon selected another Visayan-Spanish linguist, Jaime C. de Veyra, as the Institute's second chairman. To make up a truly national institute President Quezon, of course, also appointed able and scholarly representatives from the other regions of the country."

"In a recent past, however, the National Language Institute seems to have been reduced to one man, a Tagalog, who single-handedly has been, in my opinion, prostituting the purpose and intention of the original framers of the Constitution of setting up Tagalog only as a basis for, and not as the national language itself. Instead, the present trend is to go back to the stone age antediluvian Tagalog with its primitive vocabulary and limited alphabet of only twenty letters. If this tribalistic policy is ultimately and officially implemented, confirmed and/or enforced by our government, the Filipino learning to speak his national language will be forever prescribed to the absurdity and ignominy of not

being allowed to pronounce, among others, the letters "F," "V," the Spanish "C," or the diphthong "TH." He will also have to swallow the idiotic and backward Tagalog practice of lumping together such common and ordinary concepts as "husband" and "wife" into one and the same word — "ASA-WA" — instead of selecting and incorporating into the National Language from one of the cultivated dialects a distinct word for "husband" like "BANA" for instance in Hiligaynon.

"I am especially saddened by the fact that it had to be a Cebuano-speaking Visayan secretary of education (a Negrense at that!) who officially sanctioned the shameless misspelling of "Filipinas" and "Filipino" with a "P" instead of the educated, civilized and universally recognized "F." If many of us Filipinos have a congenital difficulty in correctly differentiating the pronunciation of the letters "F" and "P," "B" and "V" and "C" and "S," let us not compel all others to make the same error or condemn the entire nation to miserably mispel,

the name of our country. Let us call ourselves "Pelinos," and our country "Pelipinas" if we cannot help it, but for God's sake, let us be permitted to write the words correctly. Nobody ever chides the Spanish American for not pronouncing the letter "C" in the purely Castilian style, but in his written language "S" is never substituted for "C" where the correct Spanish spelling calls for it.

"It is high time, therefore in my opinion, that the users, students and scholars

of the other Filipino dialects organize themselves for the sanity to the all Filipino task purpose of returning some of formulating and developing our common National Language by demanding and insisting on a strict adherence to the basic lines originally conceived and specifically promulgated by our Congress under the authority of our national fundamental law, the Philippine Constitution, as recommended by President Manuel Luis Quezon. — *Manila Times*, Jan. 1969.

THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN . . .

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The claim should be made. It may make the governments keener than ever to *have universities staffed by their own nations, who share the national aspirations; it may mean wrestling with difficult constitutional issues; but the right of the university, however constituted, to control the training of attitudes is one that should be fought for and won.* For the whole concept of professional codes, and of the training of professional responsibility, is still unfamiliar in many of these countries. Universities are seen as places where people can learn to pass examinations and so gain the knowledge formerly monopolized by Europeans. They are seen too few as places where values are created and attitudes changed. — *From the Southeast Asian University by T. H. Silcock, Emeritus Professor of Economics, Malaya U.*