

The Senator from La Union: ●

● Strengthening our Union

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(Address at the Bud Daho Lodge No. 102, F. & A.M. Public Installation, Masonic Year 1967-68 at the Notre Dame Gymnasium, Jolo, Sulu.)

Republic of the Philippines
Senate
Manila

Mr. President:

I shall occupy the floor only for a few minutes to insert in our records my address on *Strengthening Our Union* delivered last Saturday at the Bud Daho Lodge 102, F. & A. M. public installation, Masonic Year 1967-1968 at the Notre Dame Gymnasium, Jolo, Sulu. It is significant that this Masonic program was held at the Notre Dame Gymnasium which belongs to a Catholic institution, and which bespeaks of a new spirit of tolerance and unity among different elements, more or less separated in the past through lack of proper understanding.

I have in my hand the printed program for the occasion which includes a message to the Masons of Jolo by the Catholic Bishop for Jolo, Monsignor Francis J. McSorley, OMI. Although I have spoken on many similar occasions, this was a rare and unique one because it was an assemblage of Masons and Non-Masons, Christians and Muslims, officers and members of the Knights of Columbus and the members of the Masonic Lodge of that region. A Catholic priest sat with the dignitaries of the Masonic Lodge during the ceremonies.

I make these brief remarks because I think the event spells a new day in

the true spirit of ecumenicity advocated by the hierarchy of the Masonic fraternity and at least by two Popes in Rome. I reiterate my request that my speech be inserted in the records.

STRENGTHENING OUR UNION

It is a great satisfaction to me to address Masons and non-Masons, Christians and Muslims in this public meeting. Let no one be surprised, in fact every one should be pleased, that I from Northern Luzon should have accepted an invitation in the extreme south of our country even on these days when Senators and Representatives are busily occupied on the opening days of the present session of the Sixth Congress. My main reason is to strengthen union and solidarity among all elements of our nation. There should be neither North nor South, neither East nor West among Filipinos.

Article I of the Constitution of the Philippines defines the national territory. It is a definition of our common country. The Article of one Section consists of one paragraph. Let me invite attention to two terms. One is "The Philippines" in the first part and the other is "the Philippine Islands" in the last part. Why? As a framer of the Constitution I can give you the underlying philosophy involved.

Turn to next page

"The Philippine Islands" is the name of our country before the Constitution became operative. "The Philippines" is the official name of our nation from the time our government operated under the Constitution.

"The Philippine Islands" is plural. It connotes division, dispersion, separation.

"The Philippines" is singular. It denotes oneness, solidarity, union.

The achievement of nationhood is a massive fact in our history. We have been blessed to become one people, the Filipino people. We have one country, the Philippines, solid, compact, united.

The waters between the islands that comprise our archipelago are not bodies of water that separate. They are bridges that unite. The sky above us is a geographic element that further serves to unify our people. In this modern age of improved means of transportation, the air, the sea, and the land should be deemed contributory to our being one people living in one national territory.

Historically there have been efforts to divide our people. Under the colonial regime, Spain as a colonizing power was guided by the policy of divide and rule. Colonization was directed toward weakening the colonists so that they may be more amenable to control and subjugation. The Spanish rulers brought with them their prejudice and hatred against their old enemies, the Moors. That is why the people of Mindanao and Sulu whom they could not turn into subservient subjects were called Moros to widen the separation of the Southerners and the inhabitants of the Visayas and Luzon. In fact there was a secret policy to exterminate the Moros. Much effort was exerted to foster the division of what the rulers called the "Moros" and the other despised "Indios." They were guided

by the policy of repulsion and division, even to the extent of subjection and extermination.

The policy of division was not entirely absent in the minds of some administrators when the government of these Islands was under the control and direction of Americans. That was so when the Philippine Commission was composed wholly or with a preponderant majority of Americans. Dr. Rafael Palma has left this valuable information which is enlightening:

"He, (Commissioner Frank Baranagan), was named Chairman of the Committee on Moro Provinces. I made a trip with him as a member of the Committee to see the conditions of that region of the Archipelago. It was the first time that I saw the dwellings of the Moros and pagans of Mindanao. The costumes and habits of the Moros impressed me greatly, so that every event of that trip is deeply engraved in my memory. I do not believe that the Americans were justified in separating the government of Mindanao from that of the rest of the Archipelago. The excuse given was that the Moros and non-Christian tribes understood only a military type of government. This was a lucid reason to hide the real one. It seems however that a few American statesmen had the intention of separating Mindanao and Jolo from the rest of the Archipelago in case the Christian Filipinos were granted their independence at some future date. All indications sustained this idea." (Palma, *My Autobiography*, pp. 87-88).

The scheme to separate Mindanao and Sulu came into the open on the occasion of a visit to the Islands by a Congressman from New York, Mr. Bacon, whom Americans in the Philippine influenced to present a Bill to that effect in the United States Congress. There were public demonstra-

Turn to page 28

STRENGTHENING OUR UNION...

From page 4

tions on the part of Filipinos against what was known as the "Bacon Bill."

Shortly thereafter I was elected Resident Commissioner of the Philippines to Washington, D.C. Sent there to work for Philippine Independence I sought to befriend Congressman Bacon who impressed me from the start as an aristocratic gentleman willing to discuss problems. I made known my mission to secure the independence of the entire Philippines and asked him to desist from the idea of segregating Mindanao and Sulu. He was attentive and asked me to meet him again and again. He was fair and reasonable. At one time I took with me the Philippine flag which had the same colors as the American flag — red, white, and blue. I directed his attention to the sun in the white triangle symbolic of Filipino unity. I pointed to him three stars that stood for Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. "I am glad to hear your explanation of the symbolism of your flag which is a beautiful flag," he said. "Thank you," I answered, and I do not want to see you eternally remembered by my people as being responsible for taking away one of the stars and destroy the symmetry of our flag." He seemed to have been impressed and let it be said to his credit that he never actively pushed for action on the segregation of the Southland from the Visayas and Luzon.

Let us learn and teach the young the value of the beautiful Filipino flag as a symbol of union. Our Masonic fraternity should cooperate with other entities and organizations ever and always to strengthen our national union. The flag ceremony is one of the essential parts of Masonic gatherings and I am glad there are so many here present to have witnessed it on

this solemn installation of the elected and appointed officials of the Lodge for the ensuing Masonic year.

Our long and checkered history has seen:

Efforts of colonizing officials to foster tribal divisions.

Acts to prevent our unity.

Establishment of "a government of the Moro provinces."

Organization of a Bureau of Non-Christian provinces.

Attempts to segregate parts of the archipelago upon achieving independence.

There are but a few steps of a general character seeking to perpetuate division among our people for in division there is weakness. Many other points of the same purpose need not here be detailed.

Historically in the early stages of our history when immigrants were just forming settlements in our country, peoples and communities were scattered and lack of means of transportation accentuated their separation. The movements for the gradual development of the spirit of union and cooperation was slow and met with a great many obstacle. However, there was a gradual evolution toward union. The consequent broadening of social consciousness was a step in the right direction. Even the movements for reform and uprising were local in the beginning or at best regional. It was after a series of revolts and revolution that the Revolution of 1896 broke out on a national scale. The meeting of delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Malolos resulting in the approval of a national constitution was a gigantic step in the direction of cementing union. Leaders of vision of our race headed by Rizal deplored the lack of national consciousness and dreamed of a united country — *Patria unida*. The subsequent organization

Turn to page 30

of the Philippine Assembly consisting of elected delegates sharing with the old Philippine Commission the task of law making contributed mightily toward broadening our horizon and developing a national spirit. Gradually but without ceasing there was a movement of our people toward broadening our horizon and developing national spirit. Gradually but without ceasing there was a movement of our people toward broadening and strengthening our union as a people.

Under the American regime we had a central government controlled chiefly by Americans but with increased voice and participation of Filipinos. This was superseded by the establishment of a government by Filipinos assisted by Americans. Then upon the advent of independence and the establishment of the Republic of the Philippines we finally had a government of Filipinos, by Filipinos, and for the residents of the entire country. This is of course a climactic outcome of the union of forces directed to the achievement of national independence.

The movement to strengthen the union was of many phases. It was not only political but it was economic, cultural, and spiritual.

The organization of a national system of education both public and private has contributed mightily toward strengthening our union. Our becoming independent gave validity to training the youth for Filipino citizenship.

I never liked the division of "Filipinos and non-Christians." This is a sinister phrase with a connotation adverse to union because the word "non-Christians" is in contra-distinction of Filipino." There should be Christian Filipinos and non-Christian Filipinos with emphasis on oneness.

At present there is a healthy sign

abroad in the name of ecumenicity. From the two Popes of Rome there had been a clear manifestation of more tolerance and unity among Christians, Muslims, and Masons.

I never liked the division of towns into regular municipalities and municipal districts and I have submitted bills that became laws converting municipal districts into municipalities. I never liked the divisive organizations of regular provinces and special provinces. Fortunately these are things of the past.

In the field of education I had something to do with implementing the principle involved in the following provision of the law creating the "Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes" which stated:

"It shall be the duty of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes to continue the work for advancement and liberty in favor of the regions inhabited by non-Christian Filipinos, and foster by all adequate means, and in a systematic, rapid, and complete manner, the moral, material, economic, social, and political development of those regions, always having in view the aim of rendering permanent the mutual intelligence between, and complete fusion of, the Christian and non-Christian elements populating the provinces of the Archipelago." (Joint Legislative Committee Report by the Joint Educational Committee of the Philippine Legislature, p. 72).

Of course this policy was in direct opposition to that which had been followed in the earlier years of the Spanish regime which has not publicly enunciated under the military regime. I publicly stated and placed on record my opinion that "the rightful policy is that of attraction and unification and not a policy of repulsion and division." As a member of the directorate of the former Bureau of Education now the Bureau of Public Schools when I was as-

signed to have charge of the education of the so-called "non-Christian elements," I formulated a policy in the form of specific suggestions to the administrative, supervisory, and teaching staffs of our school system which, among other things, included the following:

"It is essential that those connected with the work among the non-Christians be imbued with the idea that one prime objective of the whole governmental machinery is to help bring about greater nationality. To this end members of the administrative, supervisory, and teaching staffs should be imbued with the idea that it is essential and necessary that they be in sympathy with the national ideals, interests, and aspirations of the people. Inasmuch as this is the objective, and granting that teachers do possess the point of view above indicated, the pupils should be taught to look upon the Philippine Islands as their common country, and the Filipino people as their people. To this end we should do away with distinction of 'Christian Filipinos' and 'Mohammedans,' stressing rather the idea that the children are Christian Filipinos, Mohammedan Filipinos, and pagan Filipinos. The members of the teaching staff should seek to arouse in these children of non-Christian schools a greater feeling of nationality, and a greater consciousness of homogeneity." (*Ibid*, pp. 72-73).

The different enactments creating our tri-partite system of government culminating in the enactment of the independence law were potent factors in effecting union among the Filipinos. I speak of strengthening the union, that is my theme, it means that we have union but we need to keep it, strengthen it. Even the Constitution of the United States speaks of people working for "a more perfect union."

It may be truthfully said that the Constitution which is the supreme

law of the land is our greatest instrument for perpetuating and strengthening such a union. We have long ago graduated from the tribal stage and have become a people. We no longer should speak or think of Ilocano Tribe, Tagalog Tribe, and Visayan Tribe. We are all now Filipinos. Filipino is our common *apellido*. The first three words of the preamble, "The Filipino people," are expressive of a historic and notable advance in our History. The idea is that we are one people resident in one country. This should become deeply rooted in the hearts, minds, and conscience of our people.

The idea of nationalism has been broadened among people who have embraced Islam and Christianity as our religion. It has also been deepened by us who have embraced Masonry for it is a fraternal organization, national and international. When I was inaugurated as a Grand Master of Masons I spoke on the thesis of "more Masonry among Masons, more men in Masonry." The fundamental ideas of Masonry are comprised in the principle of the "Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man" and also the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. We who subscribe to the principle of union and independence should prize the sentiment enunciated by Webster in this immortal phrase: "Liberty and union now and forever, one and inseparable."

I am glad to have accepted your invitation and to have been able to be present in the South among our southern brethren and do, to Masons and non-Masons alike, this imperative duty and constant task of strengthening our union.

Union that is functional in life must be rooted in spiritual kinship. Such kinship must be reinforced by an

Turn to next page

abiding faith in a common Father. Common Fatherhood carries with it a recognition of true brotherhood. There can really be no brotherhood without fatherhood; fraternity presupposes paternity. An ideology that denies God as our Father cannot truly and sincerely teach brotherhood among men and brotherliness among nations. Our sense of paternity and fraternity enables Masons to contribute to the cause of peace, freedom and union.

There was an attempt to stress our alleged division by opponents when I was laboring for our independence in the United States. Our brothers of the South were pictured as being against independence. It is worth recording that when I was presiding over the First National Convention of the Collectivista Party, I asked Senator Haji Butu from your region to comment upon the campaign of those against independence if it is true that there were leaders of the Southland who were against it. His answer was terse and philosophic: "Can a mangosteen produce any fruit other than mangosteen?" He conveyed the idea that the Philippines could only produce Filipinos and if the people wanted independence no good Filipino could be against it. I leave this thought to my brethren of Jolo and its environs.

The principle of union is enlarging and deepening in the world. Our planet has contracted through wonderful advances in the means of transportation and communication. Science is helping to broaden man's horizon. A gigantic step in the way of preventing irritants among nations is the recent signing of an outer space treaty by the United States, Great Britain, and Russia. This has been hailed as a historic document banning the use of outer space for military purposes. People and peoples are

uniting to insure just and durable peace. We in the Philippines are afforded opportunity to think less of war that is divisive and more of uniting our talents and coordinating our forces and resources for good and righteousness.

I urge my Masonic brethren and their friends to value and implement the profound spiritual experience of belonging to a fraternity that is universal. There should be fostered a constructive feeling of belonging together. Our embracing this fraternity should make for a broader and deeper sense of kinship. Masons should not only feel that they are friends or fellow citizens but that they are real brothers and when we expand this sentiment we are in effect increasing and advancing our people's unity and greatness. △

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