

Two years ago, the municipality of Pila (population: 15,000) faced a host of economic problems. Rice production was low for lack of irrigation water. Livestock raising, another principal means of livelihood, left much to be desired in terms of output and production facilities. The high rates of interest on loans, 54 percent of which came from private moneylenders, considerably reduced their margins of profit and left very little room for expansion.

The economic picture, however, has since changed drastically.

Today, Pila, situated in the Southern Luzon province of Laguna, boasts of an average rice yield of 100 cavans per hectare, mainly due to the acquisition of irrigation pumps.

Livestock production has more than doubled. Before, poultry raisers in one barrio could market only 1,000 broilers a week. Today, their output has soared to 11,558 monthly, or nearly 3,000 each week.

From 13 cooperatives formed during the past two years and from nearby rural banks, farmers and livestock growers can now obtain low-interest loans for the purchase of either fertilizers and pesticides or equipment and supplies needed in livestock raising.

To top it all, the expanded production has created additional business and more jobs in other economic sectors of the community — rice milling, feeds, hatchery, sale of veterinary drugs, and even production and delivery of ice.

Pila's success story serves to illustrate a number of welcome events and situations obtaining in the Philippines

PILA'S SOCIAL LAB

Experiment in rural development

today.

First, it provides a graphic demonstration of one trait of the Filipino: a capacity to respond to change.

Second, it provides yet another proof of the potentials of the cooperative movement, which is now gaining momentum in various parts of the country.

Third, it shows how a multi-disciplinary and integrated approach can successfully introduce the scientific way of life into the "farming population," thereby improving the quality of life in the rural communities.

This integrated approach, now involving more than 20 government and private agencies, took the form of a "social laboratory" set up in Pila two years ago under the auspices of the University of the Philippines college of agriculture and the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture.

The success of the Pila project has been such that seven other social laboratories will soon be set up in strategic sites around the country.

Through informal discussions, demonstrations, research and other activities, field technicians teach various sectors of the population on such matters as fertilizer application, weed control, multiple cropping, forest con-

servation, cottage industries, land reform, food preservation and even family planning. Assistance is also given in the organization of cooperatives and other organizations that will enable residents to solve common problems through the pooling of human and material resources.

Without neglecting other areas of community life, the Pila project gave emphasis to the immediate need of increasing rice production and expanding the livestock industry — the main sources of livelihood in the community.

Because of the lack of credit facilities, the project coordinators assisted the farmers in setting up 13 cooperatives. Rural bank loans were also facilitated. Thus far, residents have obtained a total of P328,777 in loans, broken down as follows: P52,738 for crop production, P4,000 for irrigation pumps and P271,839 for poultry and livestock raising.

Other steps were also taken, particularly toward the acquisition of irrigation pumps and construction of canals and ditches.

Training is conducted in informal classes for all farmers' associations in the municipality.

Seminars on poultry and swine raising, for instance, are frequently con-

ducted

A year ago, with only 19 members, the Linga Livestock and Poultry Raisers' Association was supplying the Greater Manila Terminal and Food Market with 1,000 broilers a week. The association has since increased its membership to 64 and has supplied the GMFTM with 104,024 broilers during the past nine months, or an average of 2,889 a week.

Because of the increased poultry production, the association bought P316,769 worth of feeds from suppliers. It also contributed P141,924 to the hatchery industry and P6,272 to the veterinary drug industry. The rural bank in nearby Pagsanjan town, where the association members acquired most of their loans, earned P30,168 in interest.

Also in barrio Linga, the association has provided full-time jobs to two groups of persons, engaged in dressing the broilers and hauling the dressed chickens to market. The sale of ice used in the refrigeration of chickens has increased to P2,803.

The success of the Pila experiment in rural development is the result of inter-agency collaboration, the guiding principle in operating the social laboratory.

And it will now become the model for seven other social laboratories to be established in the following sites: Kabagan, Isabela; Muñoz, Nueva Ecija; Pili, Camarines Sur; Baybay, Leyte; Lambunao, Iloilo; Musuan, Bukidnon; and Kabacan, Cotabato.

Three of the new projects will be in Luzon, two in the Visayas and two in Mindanao.

PERSPECTIVES

Land Reform is as basic as the plate of rice on every Filipino's dining table. When President Marcos designated it as a major area of positive action in the current reformation program, it was in recognition of the objective truth that land reform is imperative in the economic, social and political emancipation of the broad masses of our people.

The peasantry constitute 70 percent of our total population. Together with the workers and the social middle class, they form the salient majority. These are the people who make — or unmake — a nation. These are the forces that produce the needs of society. These are the men and women who till and toil.

If this majority is shackled by an oppressive and exploitive system, if the ownership of the means of production is concentrated in the hands of a few, there can be no real freedom, and any claim to a democratic way of life is meaningless.

Freedom is the ability to move and reach a desired goal. It becomes real only in so far as one has the means to exercise it. In short, freedom is man's recognition of his own potentials and the ability to translate these into reality.

But in a society where a minority has the prerogative to impose its will on the majority, where individual interests collide with one another, freedom is transformed either into bondage or anarchy. It is clear therefore that in order for freedom to flourish, there must first of all be a unanimity of interests and unity of objectives. These basic goals must furthermore be recognized and the means to achieve them provided.

Feudalism had for several centuries deprived the peasantry of the means to exercise fundamental freedom. It imposed a system of landlord ownership of the basic factor of production — land — and promoted a monopoly of the rights



Land reform: as basic as a plate of rice

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and privileges attached to such feudalistic ownership. It chained the productive forces to a relationship which runs counter to scientific and technological advances and, therefore, became untenable in the new society.

Land reform is the legal instrument that releases the peasant from the bondage of feudalistic tenancy and the developed productive forces from the fetters of the oppressive and exploitive system that is feudalism. In releasing these forces, land reform not only lays the foundation for the economic liberations of the peasantry but also ensures the social, political and cultural re-structuring of society as a whole.

Agriculture provides the basis for thoroughgoing industrialization. Commerce and industry cannot expand without a market. Their products

cannot be absorbed by vast and impoverished peasantry. The advance of commerce and industry therefore goes hand in hand with the progress of agricultural production. Hence, the emancipation of the peasant presupposes the welfare of the factory worker and the growth of a stable middle class.

It is in this configuration that land reform could be seen as a bloodless dismantling and transformation of an old society characterized by widespread discontent. The old society had been pregnant with the seeds of discord and revolution, a desperate situation where many of the disaffected had taken to the hills and which brought the country on a fast descent to anarchy and chaos.

President Marcos reversed the situation by initiating a "revolution from the center." In placing the entire country under martial rule, he pre-empted the revolution from the lawless elements and conspirators who sought to remedy society's ills through violent means and dubious motives. Proclamation 1081 thus became the decisive move to "save the Republic and form a new society."

But fortifying a new society is a long and tedious process. It means the overhauling of the economic base upon which a superstructure of legal, political, cultural and ideological institutions rest. It means the radical liquidation of the old relations of production, particularly of feudal landownership and the inordinate profit motive of capital. It is only after these economic relations have been basically altered that new social values, views, attitudes and habits could be introduced and only after this could the New Filipino evolve.

Land reform thus assumes the function of a cornerstone for a new social edifice. It is a turning point in the sense that the new society cannot rest on an old feudalistic foundation. If there must be a new society, there must likewise be a new economic foundation, new relations of production and a place for the productive forces that lay dormant in the womb of the old society.