

■ "Education in the rural areas is one of few fields open to pioneering."

## THE DISPERSAL OF UNIVERSITIES

Our love for education is well-known. Indeed, compared to other Asian countries and in relation to total population, the Philippines has the most number of college students. Our state colleges and universities are graduating this year 6,906 students, while the private colleges and universities are graduating 56,653 students. The total enrollment this year in state colleges and universities is 48,947, while the total enrollment in private colleges and universities is 388,196. You can readily appreciate from these figures that the passion of our people for education is no mere platitude.

In *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, as well as in the constitution of *La Liga Filipina*, Rizal recognized this passion of our people for education. But it was Apolinario Mabini's mother who became, for all of us, the symbol of this passion.

We remember the heroic sacrifices that she gladly assumed in order to give her son a good education. The example of Mabini's mother is today almost a national experience. In countless hamlets all over the country, there are thousands of mothers and fathers who have willingly gone into debt or chosen a life of self-denial so that they may be able to send their children to school. At the same time, many young men and women, sustained only by ambition and the fierce desire to improve themselves, have also undergone harrowing ordeals and trials in the pursuit of higher learning.

For me, one of the most significant events of the Philippine Revolution was the founding and actual operation of a university — the *University Literaria de Filipinas*. This university moved several times in its short

life because of the tides of war, but its students and faculty members were undeterred: classes went on. The Revolutionary government, you remember, was not at all affluent, and yet it did not hesitate to allocate money for a university. Our Revolutionary leaders never doubted for a moment the value of education — even in a time of war.

These examples from our history show our deep love for education. They exemplify the Filipino's belief that education is a revolutionary and liberating force. For the poor, education is the surest guarantee of democracy. We live in an open society because of education. Our educational system, however imperfect it may be, is the one democratic factor for social mobility in our country. The opportunities for education that are open to everybody prevent our economic and social classes from classifying and make possible the movement of people from one class to another. Thus, democracy is meaningful in our country because of education.

The dispersal of colleges and universities to the rural

areas will give most of our citizens a chance to acquire higher education. The present concentration of colleges and universities in the large centers of population makes the cost of education prohibitive. Added to this, is the natural fear of parents of sending their children to distant and unknown cities where the life and possibly the culture of the people are not, in the parents' judgment, suitable for their children. These economic and psychological factors often conspire to imprison otherwise promising young minds in the narrow confines of our unchanging rural world.

The system of dispersal must take into account, however, the process of urbanization that is taking place, and will continue to take place, in the traditionally rural sections, especially in Mindanao, as a result of industrialization.

Iligan City, for instance, has for some time now been the focal point of industrial development — because of the Maria Cristina power project and the integrated steel mill — but there is as yet no visible development of its educational facilities.

But even in areas where industry and commerce are not yet very active, there will soon be an urgent need to establish colleges. The reason is the high rate of population growth which will aggravate the pressure on Manila and other big city universities, and consequently produce a tremendous overflow of applicants for college admission.

The need to disperse colleges and universities may be realized sooner than anyone expects because of the intensive investments that we are making in infrastructure projects. These infrastructure projects — roads, bridges, irrigation systems, power systems, communications networks, flood control, and so forth — will bring about increased agricultural and industrial productivity and therefore will induce a measure of prosperity in the rural areas. With prosperity, new wants will develop and chief among these, undoubtedly will be the desire for higher education.

However, I want to make the spread of colleges and universities a cause than an effect of economic and social development. Education

quickness the impulse for change: it sets the course that change must take; and finally it also teaches hope when the fulfillment of man's need for change is imperilled.

Education should reinforce individual and collective power for meaningful action in our depressed and less developed areas. It should teach a man to think for himself, to be self-reliant, and thus make himself a more useful member of society. In other words, it should increase man's confidence in himself, in the ability of his hands and mind to fashion new conditions of living which would realize for himself and society at large a better life in dignity, and freedom. Instead of awaiting the advent of prosperity, education should hasten progress and change.

Education in the rural areas is one of the few remaining fields where pioneering is still possible. For this reason, the government is called upon to provide certain incentives to those who would establish private schools of acceptable standards in remote places. These incentives may be in the form of certain tax privi-

leges or credit arrangements to finance the construction of school buildings.

We are also at present studying an effective way of dispersing schools of technology in regions of unusual agricultural and industrial promise. These schools of technology will not only train the persons needed to develop these regions fully, but will be the nuclei of future universities and institutes of science.

There are some experts who do not agree with our scheme to disperse state colleges and universities in the rural areas. Their arguments against it are well-meant and therefore we have taken them seriously. They say that at present the government cannot even support adequately the existing state institutions of higher learning. The budgets, for example, of the Philippine Normal College and the University of the Philippines, are too meager for these institutions to become major centers of learning. To establish more state colleges and universities at this stage of our development is risky because the government may not be able to sustain them. A university with in-

sufficient funding easily becomes a mediocre university. Hence, the correct approach, they argue, is for the government to increase the budgets of the existing state colleges and universities so that these institutions may grow and widen their scope.

These are cogent arguments but they are founded on a misconception. The misconception is that the government is not willing to spend beyond a certain amount for education. I should like to take this opportunity to say that under my administration, education will, if necessary, receive the greatest share of our national budget. The schools, colleges, and universities that the national government established, and will establish, shall get adequate funding for the efficient implementation of their academic programs. We cannot delay the establishment of institutions of higher learning in our rural areas, because these institutions are catalysts of change and progress. Under my administration, there will always be enough money for education.

What a people can achieve is determined by the level of their skill and knowledge.

Our schools therefore determine our capacity for national achievement. In the same way, what a province or a region can do — the progress it can achieve — depends on the skills and knowledge available within its compass. The presence of natural resources, however rich and abundant, means little or nothing unless the people have the skill and the knowledge to develop and make use of them. A nation, therefore, is as developed or underdeveloped as the skill and knowledge of the persons comprising it.

The University of Mindanao can set the pattern for the provincial and regional universities that we will establish in the future. Your experience will guide us in this task. This is the historic role of your University.

An incalculable part of the economic progress we want will depend for its attainment on the countless other men and women prepared by the schools for specific skills. Even the broad academic knowledge in the arts and humanities will play a tremendous role, indeed perhaps a leading one, for it provides that most important ingredient of progress — the comprehension of man.

Man himself, you will agree with me, is the only objective of progress. And this is where education fulfills an important function — to provide man hope against the innumerable perils of living. — *Speech delivered by President Ferdinand E. Marcos at the University of Mindanao in Davao City, May 7, 1967.*

## PEACEMAKERS

“The Sermon on the Mount says: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ It does not say blessed are the peacelovers. There’s nothing special about a peacelover. ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’ — those who work for it, by every means, by diplomacy, by the use of force, but especially by their work to build institutions of justice and habits of reliance on law both within nations and between them.” — *Henry R. Luce.*