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Presidential TABLE TALK

By MARCELINO BAUTISTA

1. This is Christmas time, the season of good will to men. Christmas and UNESCO call to mind Peace and so our peace issue, the UNESCO number.

2. It was not so easy for us to make a decision on the proposition of accepting or not the offer of the Board of the PPSTA to make us the Executive Secretary-Treasurer. This new job provides a higher salary, it is true. But this has not been sufficient inducement; there are several disadvantages. The new job is less stable than a government position. There is no insurance, and we are going to give up the prospect of benefiting from possible new legislation on retirement. Then there is the uncertainty about the source of income for the PPSTA, when the teachers begin losing their interest in the organization and refusing to pay their annual fees. If we fail to achieve anything during the next several months, will they still have enough faith in the PPSTA and their Executive Secretary-Treasurer? And so the question, "How long will this job last?" had been assailing us before we decided to accept the offer of the Board.

But we knew there was a great challenge in this work. We knew this was a piece of job which needed all the patience, the persistence, the tact, and the aggressiveness of any other job we had before demanded. We knew there was the big task of helping the Education officials improve the

present schools and ameliorate the teachers' welfare. When this issues began to crystalize, the decision was not such a hard one to make.

3. We finally secured the services of a managing editor. Her job is to help edit the Philippine Educator, see to it that the magazine is correctly printed, and look after the business end of the paper so that it will continue to thrive. The proofreading of the material for the magazine is the most tedious and yet the most important job in connection with its publication. We can say now that we did make an excellent choice when we offered her the position. She rates high in English, although, strange as it may seem, her necessary tact and persistence to get real forte is home economics; she has the materials printed right; and she knows the business of the press, having grown up in the atmosphere of the printing business (her folks own a printing establishment). She is Miss Rosalinda Sarmenta, former home economics supervisor for Nueva Ecija, and now our Managing Editor.

4. We were invited to speak at the Town Hall Philippines on the subject, "Is it through Labor Unionism that Government Employees Hope to Improve Their Welfare?" A representative of the PGEA and a newspaperman were the other speakers. Strangely enough the three of us answered the question with NO.

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In the interpellation by members of the Toastmasters' Club, this question was directed to us: "You say that the PPSTA will work for what the teachers want in a peaceful way through petitions. Suppose you do not get what you want through this procedure, what will be your next move?" We answered:

"We believe that in a democratic set-up, people will listen to reason. It would seem that intelligent people should be able to get together and discuss their problems in an objective dispassionate way. If, for instance, we should find that there is money somewhere which the government could use to improve the schools and the teachers' welfare, would it not be possible for us to hold a conference with the authorities concerned and tell them that since the money is not being used, could it be spent for the improvement of the schools and the teachers' welfare? Is the situation so bad and so hopeless that the authorities concerned will not listen to reason when they can see very well that a solution to our problem is in their hands? It is for us to help point the way; we cannot just ask and ask."

And another question was posed. "What guarantee is there that the teachers we now have, those who have stayed and have refused to seek greener pastures, as you say, can teach our children well, and what guarantee do we have that our children are learning from them?"

And we replied, "There is no guarantee either way. This much I know, however, that hundreds of the teachers who have stayed did so purely out of love for the work they are doing for our children, and they are doing their job efficiently. There is no guarantee

for effective teaching and learning until the public comes to know their schools and demand that better trained teachers be made available. It is for the people to appraise the work of the schools and they must pay the teachers more. It will be the constant endeavor of the PPSTA to open the eyes of the public to the kind of school system that we now have."

5. The next annual meeting of the PPSTA will be in June, 1943, in Manila. Article VI of the Constitution says that the Representative Assembly of the Association shall be composed of delegates representing *duly affiliated* Division Teachers Association or Division Chapter in the Representative Assembly. There are still very few Division Associations actually and officially affiliated with the PPSTA. It is desired that the Division Associations be organized right away, so that they can send delegates to the PPSTA convention.

6. Which reminds us about the principle enunciated in the Preamble of the UNESCO constitution that "wars are started in the minds of men." Personally we believe that wars start with stomach trouble, probably more so from empty stomachs. When the economy of the country is such that the people do not have the means of keeping body and soul together, they lose their conscience, they rebel against the existing order of things, and they go to war. What is high pressure politics but maneuvering for the most advantageous positions in the struggle for economic stability and power? Economic spheres of influence are the objective of all these machinations of the stronger nation to ingratiate themselves in the heart of weaker nations which have raw materials needed by world trade and industry. In this

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Mr. Flores told them that they could not stay long for the "merienda" for it was almost lunch time and the Central teachers had prepared for that.

It was only when the visitors had left that the three teachers again found time to express the thoughts foremost in their three minds.

"Do you think he had noticed that the children touched his car?" Mr. de Guzman asked.

"Those idiots," Miss Reyes exclaimed. "I shall teach them tomorrow. Look!" and she pointed to two pieces of rags left in the middle front of the room. "Do you think those were there when the DS entered?"

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struggle, the nations losing out and feeling eventually the pinch of hungry stomachs are the ones which start trouble. If it were possible to establish an Economic Commission for the World in which there are no filibusters but only statesmen who are truly and sincerely interested in obliterating the economic demand and supply so that all mankind will be equally benefited, maybe something will have been started to remove once and for all the source of all wars—the empty stomach. Ah, but we are asking for the millennium; and we are only teachers, not world economist; not even ECAFE kibitzers!

7. What strikes us as ironical in this business of the UNESCO is the fact that the countries which should be the subject of UNESCO's solicitude are not in the UNESCO. Which probably means that while the UNESCO nations are working so hard for peace, those outside the organization cannot be reached by their efforts. In other words, we are trying hard to promote peace among people who are already peace-loving, and our efforts do not reach those who are bent on creating trouble for the world. Are we really getting anywhere?

8. And talking of peace reminds us of the General who is in the UN as representative of the Philippines. He has made a name for the Philippines and for himself (himself, mainly), in his efforts to help the world seek and fashion the instruments of peace. Would it not be a good idea to ask him to come back here and try his skill at the job which certain generals of the army and the Great Guerilla Supremo himself have bungled so well? We might yet be convinced that the tongue is mightier than the bazooka.

9. In the meantime, we teachers must do our job. We must keep on preaching that the surest road to peace is an intelligent understanding of the lives and labors of other peoples and of cultivating a genuine love for them no matter what their creed, color or conscience. International brotherhood is a lofty and far-way ideal, but there is nothing else more worthy of our efforts as mentors of the citizens of tomorrow.

If we cannot say FINIS to atom-bomb manufacture, the bomb will finish us! Before that happens, and while we have this chance to say so, let us wish one and all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!