

■ (Speech delivered by V. G. Sinco at the Commencement Exercises of the East Visayan School of Arts and Trades, April 27, 1967.)

## PRODUCTIVE AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP

Our people today appear united in their concern for economic sufficiency and for moral revival. This condition naturally implies that we do not produce enough food to feed ourselves, and that our sense of honesty, our will for self-help, our feeling for decency and honor are dulled and, for the moment, incapable of actively reacting to the voice of our collective conscience. It is a fact that newspaper and radio reports tell us every day about the constant discovery of law-breakers, young and old, get-rich-quick adventurers, unscrupulous businessmen, unprincipled politicians, and bribe-taking government officials in different parts of our country. These conditions disturb our law-abiding citizens as indicating a serious defect, illness, a cancer in the social body of our nation. If not corrected on time, most of our people will remain

discontented, poor, unhappy, and may even grow bitter and rebellious. Right now there are many among them who feel that it is far better for a man to be clever and crooked than to be intelligent and honest. They complain, some silently and others openly, against this condition of things, and they are, of course, right in so doing.

Persons who view the whole situation calmly and carefully are agreed that the Philippines is going through a crisis. In the case of an individual who is sick, a crisis is the serious and most dangerous stage of his sickness. If he is not properly treated, if he does not have a good physician, the crisis continues and ends in death. On the other hand, if he receives the right medicine from the hands of an able doctor, the crisis ends in recovery and strength. When a country is in crisis, it goes

through similar dangers and uncertainties as an individual.

Many Filipinos do not seem to be fully aware of it, but the truth is that our country is at the point of a moral, economic, and social crisis. The question that confronts us then is: What positive remedy can those who love this country offer and employ to tide us over this moral, economic, and social crisis? In my opinion the answer is simple to state but not so easy to carry out; and it is this: Develop the Filipino individual into an enlightened, responsible, courageous, and productive citizen. He is the solution. Without that kind of citizen, money, materials, plans, laws, and other measures will not be of much use and avail.

It is here where the role of the school looms large, particularly the school that educates the mind and will and trains the hand, the eyes, and the other sense organs of the individual. That is the kind of school which may be expected to develop the enlightened, responsible, and productive citizen. The education of the mind enables the individual to develop his

mental power, his reason, his emotions, and his imagination. The development of this side of a man's personality is obviously an indispensable requirement of life in a civilized society. It is specially so in a democracy in which the citizen has to perform important political duties in addition to his social and civic duties. The blessings of freedom in a democracy are not for the man who does not know exactly what freedom can do to him or does not care how and when to use it.

The education of the mind enables us to decide what is needed in our barrio, town, or city and to recognize what conditions our family, our neighborhood, and our society should have to be considered civilized. It enables us to realize the dangers of ignorance, superstition, and fanaticism. It lays before us the ugliness of hypocrisy, rudeness, pretension, and superficiality in half-baked personalities drunk with power or wealth suddenly and wrongly acquired. It enables us to realize that money is not everything and that there are other things that can make us even happier than the

mere possession of wealth. Such things as culture, sympathy, courtesy, thoughtfulness, generosity, gratefulness, love are priceless possessions of a person; and they make life worth living.

The training of the hands and muscles and other physical organs of the individual is a necessary counterpart of the cultivation of his mind, reason, emotion, and imagination. Without this training, the individual lacks the tools and skills for a balanced and productive life. This training is the contribution that a good vocational and technical course could make for the advancement of the condition of the individual and the nation. Even the intellectually competent man or woman may be handicapped, in his race for success as a citizen or as a worker when he does not have a certain degree of technical knowledge and vocational training. In fact, the intellectual of the highest type has to develop some manual skill to give him a sense of completeness in the joy of living.

Success in technical work is not attainable by one who has not learned to use his

mind. Stupidity and vocational education do not go together. In all fields of productive endeavor, whether in farming, mining, fishing, building construction, or any other line of work, one must be capable of using his intelligence, his thinking ability, and his imagination in order to produce desirable results. To this should be added certain moral traits. The best trained technician must have well-developed habits of industry and honesty. The most able engineer and most talented technologist cannot be productive if they are dishonest, careless, undependable, and lazy.

A friend of mine who was once President of an American University and at present the Director of International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Baños once told me this: "There is nothing miraculous in the so-called miracle rice." We should remove from our vocabulary the words "miracle rice." Highly productive rice is not the outcome of any miracle at all. This ill-chosen phrase might mislead some of us into believing that a certain kind of rice will produce 100 to 200 cavanes per

hectare if the farmer goes to church everyday and prays for a miracle. The only way to produce a large rice crop, says this great technical man, is for a person to work hard so that the plants will always be free from weeds and will always have a certain amount of water. But that is not all. He should also learn how to use the necessary fertilizer and the necessary chemicals for spraying the plants against dangerous bugs and insects; and then to protect them against rats and birds.

In other words, the successful farmer should have at least two important qualifications: one is moral, which is diligence and persistence, and the second is technical or vocational, which is knowledge and skill in the use and control of natural elements. In the absence of these qualifications, the so-called miracle rice will never appear no matter how many pious supplications a farmer addresses to high heavens. As the old copybook maxim runs: God helps those who help themselves.

When we analyze deeply the conditions necessary to enable us to live a happy life, to live in safety and in peace

with our neighbors, to contribute to the economic and cultural well-being of our country, we are bound to discover two general and basic factors: moral strength and mental vigor. These factors may be translated into a trinity of values, namely: integrity, industry, and intelligence. No priority may be assigned to any of them. The three should be simultaneously present. No tomorrow or next week or next year should be claimed for the observance or practice of any of them. They have to take place at present, at the same time, and in our midst. They have to be produced and used here and now.

A moral upsurge and an intellectual ferment must not only concern us but must move our spirit, our will, our determination to action and execution — immediate, constant, burning not to extinction but to an ever growing fervor. Then we will become productive, as individuals and as a nation; we shall have economic sufficiency. We shall completely stop going around as weaklings and parasites, asking for food, money, protection, drifting as beggars, incapable

of self-respect and self-reliance. We will not continue destroying our forests and other natural resources to enrich ourselves overnight but will restrain our predatory practices so as not to rob unborn generations of the national patrimony and to leave them miserable. We will not run for office or hold public position merely to fill our pockets and swell our bank deposits from the money people are forced to pay as taxes. We will not violate the laws, or steal, cheat, murder, smuggle in order to lead a life of ease and luxury, to build expensive homes, to put up gorgeous fiestas, to ride in flashy cars, to travel around the world. We will be able to avoid these evils and many more after we shall have gathered moral strength through the development of habits of industry and honesty, and shall have acquired the capital virtue of integrity, and shall have cultivated a sense of responsibility, personal and social, to the highest level possible.

Economic sufficiency is certain to follow the observance of these habits, practices, virtues, and values.

Self-discipline, self-control, self-reliance make their observance possible. Then nationalism will have substance, vigor, meaning, and worth.

As students, you should realize that mental development is not a process that ends on graduation day. No, it is not and cannot be completely accomplished the moment the student receives his diploma. A man's mind is not very different from a farm land. After a crop is harvested, the land has to be plowed again, planted, cultivated, weeded, watered, and carefully watched. Otherwise, it will cease to be productive. Wild plants may grow on it from the natural effect of rain, air, and sun but not the plants we most need, the plants that can fully satisfy our hunger for food or our thirst for beauty or our sense for personal achievement.

In almost the same way, our mind needs to be continually cultivated in order to be productive of good ideas, ideas that could make us healthy, strong, helpful, unselfish, creative, and decent men and women in our community. If we have learned the right kind of intellectual education in school, we can

take care of our personal and social development. In this matter of self-development, we are our own teachers teaching ourselves from books, newspapers, radio, contacts with friends, fellow workers, and other elements in our environment. Graduation in school or college should never put an end to it. If we stop learning by ourselves, cultivating our minds, training our hands, we will deteriorate mentally, morally, vocationally and we might as well be physically dead. But lest I be misunderstood, let me make one thing clear, and it is this: In real education, the mere accumulation of facts and ideas is not the principal purpose. What is important is the understanding and organization of the knowledge derived from them. The man with an organized knowledge is more valuable than one who is simply bursting with facts and figures.

As practical men and women, you should realize the value of industrial, agricultural, and other kinds of vocational training. As neighbors and citizens, you should realize the value of industry,

honesty, friendliness, courtesy, and cooperation. As human beings, you should realize and observe the transcendent ideals of justice, tolerance, and love. All these together spell development of character and improvement of the head, the hand, and the heart.

Moral invigoration is the salvation of the Filipino people. All of us, from the President of our country down to the humblest man in the street, should dedicate the totality of our efforts, our energies, our talents, and the utmost force of our will to bring about this moral revival. It should be the object of our individual and national commitment. Without this, economic sufficiency is not possible, corruption and disorder will not stop, national advancement will not take place, even if Congress and the President will set aside billions of pesos, recruit thousands of men for public service, and deliver hundreds of speeches in all corners of this land of tremendous but unrealized potentialities. The need is for enlightened, unselfish, and sincere leaders and for industrious, intelligent, honest, and responsible citizens. — *V. G. Sinco.*