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## DR. CECILIO PUTONG, THE GENTLEMAN EDUCATOR

We take pride in dedicating this issue of the Philippine Educator to the Honorable Cecilio Putong, Undersecretary of Education, easily the gentleman educator of the Philippines. Of him and about him, not even a whisper has been heard that would reflect upon his character and sense of public service.

Affable in his ways, and readily approachable, he easily breaks into a smile upon a first interview. The small slit eyes, however, have a penetrating look, and that gracious smile could easily throw off one's guard and cause one to reveal to that sagacious man his real character and his motives. He analyzes people as they reveal themselves in their statements and mannerisms. And when an interview is over, the gentleman educator "has your number." He neatly catalogs the "number" and he will know what to say and do if he should have occasion to meet that "number" again.

The Undersecretary has a peculiar aptness for saying things in a nice way. He is particular, nay, meticulous about the use of language. He can say a most categorical NO in a most diplomatic language. The refinement of the man's character emanates from him as subtly as a perfume does. One feels that the graciousness is spontaneous. There is no studied pretense there; merely an inborn, natural exuberance of a fine character. Some one with pretensions at witticism once called him a "shrinking mimosa." This particular mimosa, however, has plenty of spines. And they are sharp! Unfortunately, however he uses his spines to his disadvantage, for he says what he thinks—in unmistakable but polite language.

Modest and unassuming, he rose from the ranks to his present position. If the present administration would keep its word to promote to the leadership of our educational system those who have risen from the ranks and therefore know the system well, Dr. Putong should be the next Secretary of Education. But he is no politician, and he is no wire-puller, a handicap difficult to overcome. While some people have attained their ambitions through diverse and devious means he has reached his present position through only one route—the route of the meritorious and the capable.

Endowed with a very objective and scientific mind, he is never swayed by passion, by rhetoric, by oratory, or by political subterfuge. His is the mind that always asks, "What are the facts in this case? We want to be sure that we know all that is necessary to know on the matter, and we want to be sure that what we now know is true." This is his invariable norm of thinking when confronted with a ticklish question of administration. He takes time to arrive at the truth; he gathers all the pertinent facts. Once he is convinced of the validity of his stand, he makes a decision that is firm and decisive. There is no "either-or" in his decisions; nor is there any taint of evasion or vacillation. He thinks objectively and makes decisions in the same manner. It is not without significance, considering his "academic" scholarship, that his dissertation for the Ph. D. degree was entitled "Specific Objectives and Content of Agricultural Education in the Philippines: Rice Culture."

The Undersecretary is very well known for his scholarly mind. Having grown up in the system, he is a practical administrator and yet his outlook upon education is based upon a hard-won and diligently acquired scholarship. His avocation is reading, and so he is widely steeped in the philosophy of education. He is author of numerous articles on education, particularly curriculum development, character education and school administration. His scholarship has been broadened by travel. He has visited school systems in the United States, Mexico, England, Italy, Spain, France, Denmark, Sweden, China, and Japan.

What is his philosophy of education? He believes in the mastery of fundamentals. The foundation of learning must be strong. Details—accurate and specific details—are important. There are minimum requirements to be learned, and yet education must be made to function in a practical way in the life of the learner. Essentials are important only insofar as they contribute to the functional life of the learner here and now. For years, as Chief of the Curriculum Division of the Bureau of Public Schools, he was responsible for making this philosophy dominate the courses of study of the public schools. He is more conservative than radical. He wants to be careful; he does not want to plunge the school system headlong into experimental uncertainties. He watches developments in educational systems elsewhere and gleans from them their best features. He never espouses an educational doctrine that is in the process of evaluation. He watches the results of experiments and the evaluation thereof, and even after knowing that the results are desirable, it will take him some time to adopt the idea. He further studies it, considering the peculiar conditions obtaining in this country. He believes that mistakes are costly, and so he is slow in accepting innovations.

Some people have criticized this attitude as revealing the lack of vigorous educational leadership, but he believes in the motto "Go fast slowly." He wants the facts first; he wants to be thoroughly convinced before he gives the signal to go forward. He is therefore the steady-hand in the efforts at educational planning. It must irk him no end when he has to work with or under amateurs, with their untried, unevaluated panaceas for educational ills. Many believe that he should keep his present position if only to furnish the Ship of Education with a steady keel, a ballast, and a balance. There are many who believe he would be very unhappy as an educator-politician. His becoming so would be a loss to education and may not be a gain to politics.

The career facts of Dr. Putong are published elsewhere in this issue. Of his importance to Philippine education, we merely repeat what was said about him when the Executive Committee of the Golden Jubilee of the Philippine Normal College cited him as a **DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS** of the institution. Said the citation:

"As a Scholar and Philippine Government Pensionado to the United States, winning election to the **KAPPA DELTA PI**, American National Honor Society in education;

"As Educator and Public Official, whose rise to the position of Undersecretary of Education has been through sheer merit, and in recognition of your brilliant and loyal service as classroom teacher, intermediate school principal, academic supervisor, high school principal, division superintendent of school in various provinces, Chief of the Curriculum Division (Bureau of Education), Superintendent of Schools (Manila), Assistant Director, and later Director of Public Schools;

"Author of many significant articles on curriculum development, school administration, and character education, in which areas you are one of the country's leading specialists;

"**NOW, THEREFORE**, the Executive Committee of the Golden Jubilee of the Philippine Normal College, speaking through the President of the college, as chairman of the Executive Committee and upon recommendation of the Committee on Awards for the Said Golden Jubilee, has this day, the first of September, Nineteen Hundred Fifty-One, chosen you **A DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS** from among the alumni of the Philippine Normal School during the last fifty years, and confers on you this **DIPLOMA OF HONOR** in recognition of your signal achievements."

## CAREER FACTS OF DR. CECILIO PUTONG

—From World Biography, 1948

**PUTONG, DR. CECILIO** Philippine educator. Born Feb. 1, 1891, Tagbilaran Bohol, Philippines.

Educated, University of the Philippines, 1914-15, 1917-18.

Western Illinois State Teachers College, BSE, 1920.

Columbia University, M. A., 1921.

University of Minnesota, spring of 1928.

Cornell University, summer of 1928.

University of Chicago, 1927-29, Ph. D. 1937.

Primary Teacher, Tagbilaran, Bohol, 1912-14.

Intermediate School principal, Dimiao, Bohol, 1912.

Teacher, Bohol High School, 1915-17.

Division Academic Supervisor, Iloilo Province, 1921-22.

High School principal, Provinces of Abra and La Union, 1922-24.

Superintendent of Schools in Various provinces, 1924-27, 1929-31.

Chief, Curriculum Department, Bureau of Education, 1931-38.

Superintendent of City Schools, Manila, 1938-45.

Chief, Elementary Education, Department of Instruction, 1945-46.

Assistant Director of Public Schools, 1946-48.

Director of Public Schools, 1948-49.

Undersecretary of Education, 1949-

Kappa Delta Pi

Professional Lecturer on Education, University of the Philippines, 1940-41 and 1946.

Former member of the Radio Control Board

Former member of the Board of Textbooks

Former chairman of the Committee on Study and Training in the U.S.

Now member of the Board of Directors, United States Educational Foundation in the Philippines

Member of the former Commission on Educational, Scientific, and Educational Matters

Member, National Executive Board, Boy Scouts of the Philippines.

Author: Objectives and Contents in Agricultural Education: Rice Culture (a pamphlet, 1937)

Author of articles on character education, curriculum development and science teaching