

ALFREDO MONTELIBANO

Secretary of National Defense
and
Acting Secretary of the Interior
Commonwealth of the Philippines

FOR the first time in the political progress of the Philippines an honest to goodness, genuine farmer gets to the high council of the government and, during this tumultuous, most critical time his appointment to two of the highest ranking positions of the Commonwealth government — those of Secretary of National Defense and Acting Secretary of the Interior — has had a most salutary effect on the people. In the same skillful and convincing manner in which he has managed his farms and other business affairs, he is now discharging the functions of the two offices to the satisfaction of the people, thus strengthening their faith in the government and confirming their belief in the traditions, achievements and determination of a democratic way of life.

In the brief time that Secretary Montelibano has held his dual role in the government the common man has realized that humility, competence and vigilance, rather than arrogance and intolerance, are the attributes of a true leader of men, as he patently is. If the record of his past accomplishments is any criterion, the people may rest assured that the administration of the two departments under his care is in safe hands. His success as Mayor of the City of Bacolod and as a progressive sugar planter and businessman is of common knowledge among his political and business colleagues as well as to the hundreds of his employees and laborers who have been the beneficiaries of the efficient management and the introduction of modern methods in the operation of his sugar plantations and other agricultural and business enterprises.

Secretary Montelibano's name appears in *Who's Who in the Philippines* as a business executive and sugar planter, to which may now be added the appellation of a government executive. He is one of the most progressive citizens of Negros. He opened the Capitol Subdivision which had facilitated the building of the modern section of Bacolod City around the Provincial Capitol. As a farmer he is distinguished and has been eminently successful. He is one of those who pioneered in the use of modern farm implements, selec-

ted seed of high-yielding varieties of sugar cane and the application of fertilizers. He believes in diversification of crops and has established fruit orchards of practically all known commercial species such as avocados, cimitos, bananas, lanzones, pineapples, etc. He also had dairy, hog and poultry farms. He introduced modern business methods in his farming enterprises, thereby obtaining high efficiency in management and good will from his associates and farm laborers. During the labor crisis in Negros a few years ago, he had solved farm labor's difficulties by increasing their wages, providing them with adequate quarters with light and water facilities and free medical attention and medicine, and organizing healthful recreation for them and their families. For the successful operations of his business and farming interests and the concession to labor of its due, and perhaps more, to enhance its welfare, Secretary Montelibano was awarded in 1940 the distinction of being the Commonwealth's Model Employer of the year. He is a liberal and is ever ready to assist in any task for the amelioration of the condition of the masses.

Before the war in the midst of his multifarious business activities, he succumbed to the call of public service and, with his known reputation as defender and protector of the people, has gone into the realm of politics as a duck does to water. Success crowned his political activities to such an extent that since 1938 he has already been a power to reckon with in Occidental Negros. His wing of the Nacionalista Party in that province has succeeded in placing one of their men in the Philippine Senate and another in the House of Representatives.

Secretary Montelibano was literally born with a silver spoon in his mouth and has grown up amid plenty and comfort. Yet during the Japanese occupation of Negros he had chosen to live in the mountains, leaving behind him the comfort of his home in the city, that he might lead the resistance against the invaders. In the mountains he had organized and carried on the functions of the Commonwealth

government. He had been appointed Commonwealth Governor of the Islands of Negros and Siquijor Islands by the late President Quezon. Together with the USAFFE officers who had refused to surrender to the Japanese, they organized and maintained an army of resistance which numbered about 12,000 officers and men. Time and again the Japanese had tried to lure him to come down to the lowlands and to cooperate with them, sending him the choicest of gifts, promising him security and every facility and comfort and even an appointment to a high office, but he had remained adamant; he had stuck to his mountain headquarters until the Island of Negros was liberated. He is a patriot but he has never bragged it. Unlike the uncompromising attitude of some of those who had lived in the hills during the enemy occupation, his is humanely considerate and sympathetic toward those who had chosen the lowland life but who had remained loyal to the United States and Commonwealth governments.

In spite of the tremendous time-consuming tasks of his present positions, he has found time to work for the welfare and promotion of the youth of the land. He is a member of the National Committee of the Boy Scouts of the Philippines and head of the most important Committee on Finance. He had promoted boys scouting in Negros and during his chairmanship of the local council had made the movement so strong that the membership was greater than that of the Manila council. He believes that the proper building up of the youth is the only safe way to insure the future security of our country.

Born on December 20, 1905 at Silay, Occidental Negros, Secretary Montelibano has scaled the heights of his political career at the age of less than forty. His marriage to the former Miss Corazon Locsin has been a most happy one and has been blessed with five children.

