

- A well-known university administrator and mathematics and engineering professor tells us here that the revival of Grade Seven in elementary schools does not necessarily improve education.

THE SEVENTH GRADE AGAIN

The raging controversy regarding the restoration of the seventh grade has finally been settled — unwisely and without thorough study, I fear. The Municipal Board of Manila has decided to restore it.

To this august (pronounced with accent of the last syllable not like the month of August as many congressmen do) body that approved its restoration, to Mayor Villegas who must have recommended the restoration, to Vice Mayor Astorga who even visited me in my office and left, promising that it shall not pass because he had better plans, to the city superintendent of schools who promised to call on me to discuss the matter but never did come, to the columnists who rejoiced over the decision and finally to the editorial writers who praised the action of the Board — to all these and sundries I ask these questions:

1. Do you know of any scientific study showing that the abolition of the seventh grade in 1940 is the principal cause of our educational deterioration?

2. Have you explored other possibilities perhaps not even as costly, which might bring about better returns?

If you cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, then you acted without due deliberation and therefore unwisely. Please do not cite the Swanson recommendation contained in "A Survey of the Public Schools of the Philippines — 1960" as the Mayor did in his letter to me. I happened to be a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee of the Filipino and American team that conducted the survey. The report did recommend the restoration of the seventh grade, but it was third in its

list of eleven (11) recommendations.

I am afraid that most of those who favor the restoration have been guilty of that mortal sin in logic known as ADHOC ERGO PROPTER HOC, which means that if EVENT B took place after EVENT A, then EVENT A is the cause of EVENT B. Here is an example, in simple language, of this kind of fallacious reasoning:

Pedro swallowed his tongue after his girl had kissed him. Therefore the kiss is the cause of Pedro's swallowing his tongue. The reasoning is not necessarily valid. The conclusion may or may not follow. The reasoning is valid only if Pedro swallows his tongue everytime he is kissed by his girl. It is only when this "necessary and sufficient condition" is fulfilled that the reasoning is valid.

In the case of the restoration of the seventh grade, I claim that a simple restoration will not improve our educational system. If the kind of seventh grade that will be restored is of the same quality as the present quality of instruction prevailing in general in our

educational system, the restoration will only mean another poor year to an already poor system. It will only mean more quantity, not quality. And improving our educational system, I thought, meant improving the quality, not quantity.

And do the supporters of the seventh grade know that there was no seventh grade before 1907 and the graduates of the high school then were much better than our graduates today? Do they know that even today the sixth grader in our better schools are much better prepared than the first or second year students in our average high schools? This statement can be verified by the unbelievers by a simple test in reading. If a second year student in the average high school is not as well prepared as the sixth grader in our better schools conclusions can be drawn?

Two conclusions: (1) that adding one more year is a waste of money and (2) it is quality, not quantity that is needed to improve our educational system. One need not be a councilor or a mayor to see these obvious things.

There is only one justification in restoring the seventh grade which is: IT IS THE LAW. But in mitigation may I call the attention of the Superintendent of the City Schools and Mayor Villegas, that there are many laws of the land that are not followed. And not following an ill-conceived law is not as bad as not collecting the garbage or not fixing the streets of the City of Manila — I beg your pardon, I mean MAHARNILAD, or is it MAHARLIKA?

Incidentally I am not insanely obsessed with relegating the seventh grade to oblivion because I never had the privilege of going through the seventh grade. But I am not for it NOW. Not until we have improved what we have! Not until we are sure, after a careful study by competent men, that the restoration is the best way

of spending what little money we have not got. Not until we have studied the other ten suggestions of the Swanson report to see which will be the best to adopt! And not until we have listened and considered the reasons of the oppositionists. I understand there was a public hearing. I read about it only in the newspapers after our return from a short trip. But for months if not years I have been begging all authorities to hear the other side of the question and to no avail. Perhaps I should resort to the favorite pastime of challenging all and sundries in a public debate. 'Oh, but it is so useless — and so infantile! And with this last article of mine, I give up! — *By Vidal A. Tan, Former President of the University of the Philippines, as published in the Manila Times, July 10, 1965.*