



Implementing The Recommendations Of The Bell Missions

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Much discussion has been provoked by the Bell Mission Report. Most of it has come from the top brass of the government, of political parties, and of business and industrial circles. While some of the ideas advanced in such discussion are being crystalized into a concrete, full-partnership plan of action of the Philippines and the United States, it is doubtful whether the average village **tao** has acquired an idea about the matter. It is possible that he may not even have heard about the Bell Mission. And even if he has accidentally learned about it, it is not improbable that he would look upon it as just "one of those things" that politicians and bosses periodically rave about. It is likely that he would worry more about his **carabao**, appearing lately to be showing signs of age, or of his field of rice being invaded by swarms of **maya**. His wife could not be any better enlightened. She probably would be more occupied transforming discarded clothing into diapers for her next baby who would soon be born and become one more mouth to feed in the already overpopulated household.

Teachers as Purveyors of Information

Herein lies a great opportunity for service of the 85,000 public school teachers of the Philippines. Being found in almost every village of the Philippines, the teach-

ers can inform the people about the Bell Mission Report and acquaint them with the steps the Philippine Government is taking to implement acceptable recommendations of the Mission.

What are the vital recommendations of the Bell Mission? Culled from the long report are the following recommendations:

1. That the finances of the Government be placed on a sound basis in order to avoid further inflation; that additional tax revenues be raised immediately in as equitable a manner as possible to meet the expenditures of the Government; that the tax structure be revised to increase the proportion of taxes collected from high incomes and large property holdings; that the tax collecting machinery be overhauled to secure greater efficiency in tax collection; that a credit policy be adopted which will encourage investment in productive enterprises; and that fiscal, credit and investment policy be better co-ordinated to prevent inflation.

2. That agriculture be improved by applying known method of increasing the yield from all basic crops; that the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources be adequately supplied with funds and the agricultural extension service expanded; that the agricultural college at Los Baños be rehabilitated and the central experi-

ment station located there, with other stations at appropriate places throughout the country; that rural banks be established to provide production credit for small farmers; that the opening of new lands for settlement in homesteads be expedited and the clearance of land titles promptly assured; that a program of land redistribution be undertaken through the purchase of large estates for resale to small farmers; and that measures be undertaken to provide tenants, with reasonable security on their land and an equitable share of the crops they produce.

3. That steps be taken to diversify the economy of the country by encouraging new industries; that adequate power and transportation facilities be provided as needed for further economic development; that a Philippine Development Corporation be established to coordinate all government corporations and enterprises and liquidate those that are ineffective; that financial assistance be made available to productive enterprises by the Corporation acting in cooperation with private banks; that the natural resources of the country be systematically explored to determine their potentialities for economic development; and that the present laws and practices with respect to the use of the public domain be reexamined.

4. That to avoid a further deterioration in the international payments position and to reduce the excessive demand for imports, a special emergency tax of 25 per cent be levied for a period not to exceed two years of imports of all goods other than rice, corn, flour, canned fish, canned milk and fertilizer; that if such an emergency

import levy is not possible under the Trade Agreement with the United States, either very heavy excise taxes should be imposed or a tax of 25 per cent should be levied on all sales of exchange; that, as a safety measure, the present exchange and import controls be retained but their administration be simplified and liberalized and the full remittance of current earnings be permitted; that a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation be concluded between the Philippines and the United States and the present Trade Agreement re-examined in the light of the new conditions.

5. That an adequate program of public health and improved education be undertaken, and better facilities for urban housing be provided; that the right of workers to organize free trade unions to protect their economic interests be established through appropriate legislation; that abuses in present employment practices depriving the workers of their just earnings be eliminated by legislation making mandatory direct payment of wages and retroactive monetary awards to workers; that a minimum wage for agricultural and other workers be established to provide subsistence standards of living.

6. That public administration be improved and reorganized so as to insure honesty and efficiency in Government; that the civil service salaries raised to provide decent standard of living; that the Philippine Government remove barriers to the employment of foreign technicians and take steps to improve training facilities for technicians in the Philippines; and that in accordance with the request of

the Philippine Government, the United States send a Technical Mission to assist the Philippine Government in carrying out its agricultural and industrial development, fiscal controls, public administration, and labor and social welfare program.

7. That the United States Government provide financial assistance of \$250 million through loans and grants, to help in carrying out a five-year program of economic development and technical assistance; that this aid be strictly conditioned on steps being taken by the Philippine Government to carry out the recommendations outlined above, including the immediate enactment of tax legislation and other urgent reforms; that expenditure of United States funds under this recommendations, including pesos derived from the United States loans and grants, be subject to continued supervision and control of the Technical Mission; that the use of the funds provided by the Philippine Government for economic and social development be co-ordinated with the expenditure of the United States funds made available for this purpose; and that an agreement be made for final settlement of outstanding financial claims between United States and the Philippines, including funding of the reconstruction Finance Corporation Loan of \$60 million.

In the informational campaign, which can easily be done through the regular meetings of the PTA's, it is important to consider a number of things. Here are some of them:

First, let us study the report and discuss it, but not with the feeling of "having an ax to grind." Every-

one knows that all peoples of the world have troubles and failings. We have a fair share of them. But we cannot be continuously snarling at each other in a world where the dogs of war are again on the loose, oblivious of the fact that it is more vital to us to cooperate in their elimination than to indulge in ceaseless and useless mutual recriminations about them. We made mistakes in the past and we shall doubtless make more in the future. Surely despair over such errors should not reduce us to utter futility. We should forge ahead to do that which we must do for the good of the country by using the same errors as stepping stones to better ways of doing things. There is no implication here of condoning inefficiency, injustice, dishonesty, and other sins of misgovernment. These must be wiped out. Yet we must not paralyze our national effort by self-flagellation and lamentation in face of a crisis. The time calls for more positive and constructive effort and less of agitative and divisive oratorical sound and fury but signifying nothing.

Second, let us not consider American aid in the light of narrow, local perspective. It is not a question of "how much shall my barrio or town get from the aid." Most of the Bell prescriptions are remedies that are intended to cure a nation-wide debility in our economy. It would be absurd for a part of the body, say the finger, to be selfishly concerned about what it would directly receive as nourishment, unmindful of the fact that the whole organism is sick. The development of a healthy and strong national economy is the paramount consideration.

Third, let us avoid falling into the illusion that the Bell Financial aid is going to be just one of those periodical windfalls from a rich and generous uncle, or an outright gift in the Santa Claus tradition for which uncle Sam has become so well known the world over. The United States has a stake, and a vital one at that, in the use of the Bell Mission millions. American taxpayers cannot simply pan out millions from sheer generosity while still bearing the crushing burden of a huge public debt resulting from World War II. Though sentimental ties with the Filipinos are a factor in the grant of the aid, the hard fact is that the Americans need us and we need them in the unfolding struggle between our common democratic way of life on one hand and the Communist way of life on the other. On our part we cannot afford to be continually looking forward for largesses from America. Our self-respect as a sovereign people should point to self-help as the better way out.

Fourth, let us get out of the false belief that mere possession of money is the key to the solution of our economic problems. True, money from the United States will help bolster up a sagging economy, but that money is after all hard-earned and saved by American ingenuity and labor. If we expect to rise from our difficulties the Bell Mission way, we must put forth in the common pool our productive effort.

In a country like ours, where a small percentage of the people is reached by the press, the radio, and other means of mass communication, the teacher occupies a strategic position in disseminating

information. He cannot deny his country this service at a time such as this. Enemy propagandists are even now twisting the facts about the Bell Mission, characterising the mission as evidence of the imperialistic designs of capitalist America. It would be a calamity to the nation if the teachers fold their arms to permit propaganda of this type to poison the mind of our village folks. The teachers therefore, should meet the challenge of a new role and make their voice heard in the community on so vital a matter as the Bell Mission recommendations.

What Should Teachers Do About Improving the Collection of Taxes Which the Bell Mission Has Urged?

"I have enough trouble with teaching," said one teacher once, "without bothering about tax collection."

"Besides," interrupted another, "that is the duty of the treasurer, and he does not pay our salaries on time."

It is all true. Yet the teacher cannot rationalize himself out like this in the matter of collecting taxes. He cannot escape sharing the blame for any breakdown in the collection of taxes. From the time popular education was established 50 years ago in our country to the present, we have continuously taught in school that paying taxes is a duty of citizens. What results have we to show that we have achieved the objective satisfactorily? In school we teach admiration, rightly so, for Bonifacio when, at Balintawak, he accompanied the famous cry of defiance against Spanish oppression by tearing into bits his receipt for ce-

dula tax. We also developed the attitude among pupils that exacting tribute was wrong during colonial days. But we failed to show that times have changed... that we are not paying more tribute to maintain a foreign master. We are taxing ourselves to maintain the responsibilities of our being a free nation... to develop our own educational system as we please... to promote the well-being of our people in the manner we like best... yes, do the one thousand and one things that a sovereign country is expected to do in the concert of free nations. The age-old defiance to exaction of assessments by the state should be supplanted by a willingness to pay such obligations. A tax is no longer a mark of slavery. It is in fact now a patriotic duty. The argument that part of the tax money might be squandered through inefficiency, graft and corruption, and therefore we should resist paying it, no doubt has a certain amount of validity, but such negative attitude would be as absurd as refusing to pay one's water bill and denying oneself of precious water, simply because part of the water used is spilled or that at times the water pressure is low and unable to give the user the comfort of a shower or a ready flush in the toilet bowl.

Surely the teacher must help develop a sane attitude toward taxes. In many classrooms one can find nicely framed the 16-point Quezon Code of Ethics for Citizens. Point 4 says, "Pay your taxes willingly and promptly. Citizenship implies not only rights but also obligations." President Quezon did not issue this injunction merely to adorn the walls of classrooms. Memorizing this citi-

zenship commandment will be of little benefit. Its practice is the supreme method of its teaching as well as the real test of its accomplishment.

The vicious circle in which we find tax paying and electioneering must be broken by intelligent adult education work. It would be disastrous if our people would think that, by intimidating candidates during election time, they would get for their village financial allotments far in excess of what their village contributes by way of taxes, to say nothing of threatening candidates if they vote for increases in taxes. Many politicians shudder at the thought of increasing taxes, because during election time voters get their "revenge" by making candidates pay for overdue taxes.

The slow but sure cure of this sad state of affairs is proper education. Like a good habit, tax paying can be developed through patient and persistent teaching. In 1948 the teachers of Bulacan demonstrated that, with their wholehearted cooperation, the percentage of collection could be upped considerably. The increased collection for that year is evidence of the fact that it is not only the coercive power of the law that tax payers will respond but also to intelligent understanding.

To cite an example, here is one. In a meeting of barrio folks whose tax payment record was rather low, lecture revealed that fact that even if all the people of that barrio would pay their taxes the total amount would not reach 2,500 pesos, including a fair estimate of the so-called hidden taxes. To maintain the 200 children in school in

that barrio the government had to come from richer communities to help this community pay for the schooling of its children, to say nothing of other public services such as roads, artesian wells, police protection, etc. Should not the people of the barrio then demonstrate their willingness to shoulder the burden? Their pride and self-respect touched, the people of the barrio increased their percentage of tax payment.

Like any other desirable democratic practice, the payment of taxes must be a "grassroots" affair. The PTA's afford excellent opportunities for bringing home the necessity of paying taxes. The millions contributed by members of PTA's constitute a very impressive proof of what understanding can do to loosen the purse strings of the people, arouse generosity in contributing materials, and motivate donation of labor in promoting a worthy project. That spirit of civic consciousness is there, but, like a genie, it lies dormant until leaders awaken and organize common effort to put it to work.

Productive Work in Homes and Schools

Money alone is not enough with which to nurse our ailing economy back to health. More than money is productive labor. We imported in the Philippines in 1949 vegetables with a market value of 18.7 million pesos, fruits worth 15.6 million pesos, fish and fish products totalling 32.7 million pesos, meats and dairy products valued at 60.5 million pesos. While we succeeded in 1950 in decreasing the importation of these foodstuffs, the decrease was more due to im-

port control, an abnormal and emergency procedure, than due to the more natural and more healthy method of increasing production. If we remove controls now, it is not unlikely that imports of food products will soar to new heights. It is for this reason that the Bell Mission stressed the need for greater production. Here is where productive labor comes in.

What can the teachers do in the matter? It is now trite to say that teachers should lead in food production. Yet there are many unused vacant spaces in many communities even surrounding school sites, not to mention inside school grounds. Lectures in the PTA meetings are evidently an inadequate approach to the problem. They should be followed by organization of neighborhood teams of families or by some such means as have been found effective in Cagayan, Pangasinan, Iloilo, Oriental Negros, Bohol, and other provinces where the community-centered school has been a successful venture. Schools should also serve as distribution centers for seeds and seedlings. Big schools with animal raising facilities should function as breeding centers of better-type breeds of poultry and swine. Processing and preservation of farm products should be a part of the program, for there would be no point to increasing production if the produce will go to waste due to bad methods of storage, preservation and marketing.

Being an agricultural country, the Philippines should have more farm schools not only on the high school level but also on the elementary level. Why should not the sons and daughters of farmers to-

gether with their parents not have farm instruction facilities right in their own villages? Immediately after liberation some such schools were established in Bohol—each school having at least 10 hectares to cultivate. By 1948, eleven of them were already in operation. Farm instruction from one secondary school in the province was not considered enough. Such instruction could be brought to the villages where the farmers do their work. It was to accomplish this aim that the eleven farm schools were organized.

Our country has a water area about six times its land area. We possess one of the longest coastlines in the world. Yet with all our advantages in water resources, we had to buy abroad nearly 33 million pesos worth of fish in 1949. To illustrate what can be done by the schools in this matter let us look at the experience in Bohol. In 1946-47 when we opened the first big fish pond in Anda, Bohol, with the PTA wholeheartedly supporting the project, the people were indifferent to the value of mudflats adjoining streams along the coast. After successfully demonstrating that bangus culture could be made profitable in Anda, people "scrambled" for applications with the Bureau of Forestry to develop mudflats into fish ponds. In one case, in the town of Talibon, a private person complained with higher education officials and contested the right of a school to establish a fish pond in an area he claimed to have been covered by a prior application he filed with the Bureau of Forestry. The incidents was proof of the fact that insofar as stimulating in the province a new industry, that of bangus cul-

ture, the schools succeeded. By 1948 the schools had executed or planned 78 fishery projects.

To carry on the work in community-centered schools such as that done in the farm schools and fishery projects of Bohol in 1945 to 1948, a new type of leadership and a new kind of dedication to service by teachers were necessary. For two years all schoolmen went through successive training courses (orientation courses followed by leadership courses). Two teachers had to be sent to the School of Fisheries in Malabon for practical work in fish ponds. The field men of the Bureau of Plant Industry and Bureau of Animal Husbandry were kept busy for lecture and demonstration work. The goal was not merely to set up a program of work experience but a program of home and community improvement where increased capacity to earn a living occupied the focal center of interest.

In this article not much detail can be given about what the teachers can and should do about production. But enough of the main line of activity have been indicated. The Bell Mission Report serves as a signal for all Filipinos, from the President down to the farmer in the remotest barrio, to buckle down to work. In the great task ahead there should be more room for fruitful action and collaboration and less of useless bickering on past and present faults. The need of the hour is production. Educators of yesteryears met a similar challenge by work that yielded good results. Can educators today duplicate the feat or even excel it? Only they can give the answer. . . and by deeds!