

Readjustment of our Reserve Officers

by Major Paterno Santos

From Military to Civilian Life is, to a Reserve Officer, a Change Fraught with Problems Which He Can Readily Solve with the Attendance of a Helping Hand of the Government.

WHETHER reserve officers come from the ROTC or the School for Reserve Commission, they meet the same problem of adjustment when called to active duty and when separated from the service after their tour of duty. When a reserve officer is called to active duty he is guided by his superiors and friends and the regulations before him, to adjust from civilian life to the "life in uniform." But when he is separated from the service, his wits are matched with the problems of the civilian world, with no one to help, but with plenty of competitions to face and multifarious obstacles to overcome, if he has to

survive and maintain the dignity and standard of living he has gained while in the active service.

One of the greatest problems a reserve officer faces when he is separated from the service is to readjust to civilian life. Several laws have been enacted to provide for the security of reserve officers who were called to active duty, especially those who had stayed a considerable length of time in the active service, yet many reserve officers do not find it easy to attain normalcy in civilian life after having stayed long and adopted their lives and those of their family with the "officers world."

Section 49, Commonwealth Act



Activated, a reserve officer has many guides in his readjustment from civilian to military life. Deactivated, he finds it difficult to readjust himself to civilian life. The competitions and obstacles he faces are numerous.

No. 1, otherwise known as "The National Defense Act", as amended by CA No. 659, dated 7 June 1940 states that "any employee of the Government called for training instruction, or for regular annual active duty training, or for extended tour of active duty, shall not lose his position or suffer a loss of pay due to his absence in the fulfillment of his military obligations. A reserve officer on extended tour of active duty, regardless of the amount of his compensation in the civil position shall be entitled to quarters or rental allowance as may be prescribed for his grade by Army regulations" This provision is

good for those who hold position in the government. How about those officers who were not government employees? Those reserve officers who were engaged in private business? In the case of those who run their own private business, they often times lose contact with their business and business associates, especially when assigned away from their sphere of business. This is more apparent when they are kept in the service for more than six months, so much so, that when they get out of active duty, they find that they practically have to start all over again in their civilian occupation and source of livelihood. It is not

unusual that when a reserve officer goes back to business, he finds the field he had left overcrowded or taken over by other businessmen, usually aliens or foreigners, or groups of individuals who offer keen competition. It is even worse for those who find out that they cannot even have a business or job when reverted to inactive status.

Then we have cases of the low-salaried employees. Take the case of an emergency employee who had been earning regularly his four (P4.00) pesos daily wage. He seeks to be called to active duty even for a six months period thinking that it will be of great help to him and his family, if he is called. When called to active duty, he adjusts himself to his

new surrounding and companions, only to find that when he begins to like his new army life, his tour of active duty is finished and he and his family are sent back home at army expense. He also discovers that his family's source of support on his army pay envelope, to which they have also adjusted themselves had been cut off. What does he do now? Perhaps, go back to his old job if he still has one. But will he be willing to go back as a laborer after wearing the officer's uniform and after building up a prestige and a name, that of "an officer and a gentleman?"

The problem is not for those who have ready jobs waiting for them to go back to or those who have wealth of their own to

It is believed that reserve officers reverted to inactive status are willing to take up farming and other vocations if sufficient help can be extended them by the government. The help will enable them to make a promising start.





It is doubtful whether a reserve officer will, unless forced by circumstances, go back to his old job of a laborer after wearing the officer's uniform and enjoying the prestige of "an officer and a gentleman."

maintain the dignity they have acquired while in active duty in the Armed Forces. While this group of reserve officers may constitute a minority, yet the good name of an organization, which is built up by all the members comprising the group, can be destroyed by only a few of its unfortunate members, either through their own choice or through no fault of their own. What then is our problem? The entire officers corps would like to keep the good name of the officers' corps of the Armed Forces of the Philippines that they had built. It is therefore, those less fortunate few whom we seek to help in order

to enable them to continue setting good examples for the members of our citizen army and for our people. The problem, then, is not only the individual's but also that of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and of the government.

The greater bulk of our reserve officers comes from that group of college-educated young men who find glamour in the uniform as Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets, and who upon finishing the Advance Course find themselves qualified to be commissioned into the reserve force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Another group of enterprising men



A commissioned officer, whether on active duty or not, has to maintain the dignity of a leader. Maintenance of this dignity is hard for a reverted officer who finds readjustment to civilian life as difficult.

comes from the ranks and files, those who possessed enough educational qualification and experience and through perseverance and hard work complete the course in the School for Reserve Commission of the Philippine Army Training Command, Armed Forces of the Philippines or other military schools.

When an individual seeks a commission in the reserve force, our laws and regulations require of him certain qualifications before he is commissioned. The Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines, through the Reserve Affairs Division and all the authori-

ties concerned, determines if the applicant is fit to join that group of individuals who rightfully call themselves "Officers and Gentlemen." The applicant once granted a commission is appointed by the President of the Philippines as an acknowledged leader. He is a leader to lead his men "through thick and thin" and to pursue a course in the improvement of his profession and the protection and advancement of the well-being of his people. Because of this responsibility vested in a commissioned officer, it is but fitting that he be given assistance to enable him to accomplish the mission of lead-

ership, whether he be in the active duty or in civilian life. Once commissioned, the officer must at all times be among the leaders in his field so as to retain the dignity and respect expected of an officer. Whether in the active duty or not, he must be looked upon as a leader in his community and of his people, otherwise, if he can not gain the respect and confidence of those about him, then he is not fit to become an officer.

As we say, the problem of maintaining the good name of our officers group is not mostly for those who can take care of themselves once out of the service, but rather those who will find themselves without work occasioned by their call to active duty training. What then has our government done and what else can be done to help this group of deserving, yet less fortunate individuals?

Take a look at a few of our laws which seek to extend help to our serviceman. The most recent is Republic Act No. 1363 "An Act to give Preference to Veterans in Appointments in the government, government-controlled or semi-government corporation and for other purposes other considerations being approximately equal." But how many positions with officer category will be available for our separated reserve officers under this provision of RA No. 1363?

Most government positions are non-productive in terms of economic goods except positions in some Government corporations which may be productive economically.

One may ask, how many government corporations do we have? It is believed that the problem of ameliorating our separated officers and enlisted personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines can be solved by applying some existing laws passed by our Congress and approved by the President.

The implementation of RA No. 1382, which provides "That Reserve Officers with at least ten years active accumulated commissioned service who are still on active duty at the time of the approval of this Act shall not be reverted into inactive status except for cause after proper court martial proceedings or upon their request x x x." This, in effect, is not different from an automatic integration of those reserve officers who are in some ways even in more advantageous position than regular officers, in that, while regular officers can be separated from the service for inefficiency, after a verdict of an efficiency board alone, the reserve officer can only be separated through court martial. Under this provision, a reserve officer with 10 years of service or more who no longer finds the service to his advantage, or who finds it inconvenient for him and his family can quit the service "through his own request" and still retain his commission in the reserve force.

There is also Section IX-II of the Special Provision, for Armed Forces of the Philippines, of RA No. 1350 which was approved



After having stayed long in the military world and adapting themselves and their families to it, reserve officers, to attain normalcy in civilian life, should receive assistance from the government in terms of beneficial laws.

June 18, 1955. It provides "that any such reserve officer reverted to in-active status who has at least five years of active commissioned service shall be entitled to a gratuity equivalent to one month's authorized base and longevity pay in the rank held at the time of such reversion for every year of active commissioned service; PROVIDED FURTHER, That any reserve officer who receives a gratuity under the provision of this Act, shall not, except during a National emergency or mobilization, be called to a tour of active duty within five years from the date of reversion; PRO-

VIDED FURTHER, That the Secretary of National Defense is authorized to extend the tour of active duty of reserve officers who are qualified Military Pilots and doctors." Here it is apparent that the intention of the law is to provide protection to those reserve officers who had rendered and spent the better part of their useful years in the service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and their country. The above provisions of law however, may not be considered as of permanent duration, as the Appropriations Act normally covers a period of one year, and unless the above provi-



Resettlement and industrial activities being undertaken by the government can be exploited to give reserve officers a place in them upon reversion to inactive status.

sions are carried over in succeeding Appropriation Acts or are finally enacted into a separate law by the Congress of the Philippines, it may not only mislead those affected by it, but may cause further confusion and discontent.

For this reason alone, while we seek to award and provide a better security for our Reserve Officer contingents of sufficiently long period of service in the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the effort must be geared to a more permanent solution to their plight. This may mean the extension of the benefits of certain provisions of some existing laws other than those mentioned above, which for all intent and purposes,

were enacted with the end in view of helping former members of our Armed Forces.

It is believed that Reserve Officers reverted to inactive status are willing to take to farming and other vocational professions if sufficient help can be extended by the government to make a fresh start in life on a more permanent basis.

An officer, because of the position which he maintains whether regular or reserve, spends practically all his earnings to maintain his social position and that of his family while in the service. It is, therefore, hardly expected of an officer to be able to accumulate savings from his month to month,

year to year earnings to take care of himself and his family upon separation from the service. When he becomes a pensioner under the army retirement system, he is assured of a regular income, otherwise, he has to work hard even in his old age to earn a living. Except for a few reserve officers who already had established sources of livelihood when they entered the service, the majority of them now in the active service, when reverted, have to start anew on various civilian jobs if they can find one.

The intention of giving gratuities upon separation of the officers who had at least five years or more of active service is to be able to help them during that pe-

riod when they are still looking for jobs or adjusting themselves to civilian life. Of the hundred of officers who may be reverted, how many can find suitable jobs until they exhaust their finances? With the hundred of thousands of unemployed, and considering that these reserve officers are not as young as they used to be, they can not just fit into any kind of civilian job. Considering also that these officers had been used to working regularly in the military profession, the need for an immediate job is now more apparent as the craving for work had almost become second nature to them. It is, therefore, well that a solution be found to help them on a more permanent basis or in reset-

Industries and settlements designed to be suitable for reserve officers will not only take care of those who are reverted but also give impetus to economic development which is a major undertaking of the government.





Reserve officers with 10 years of service can be reverted to inactive status only for cause and after due court martial, as provided by Republic Act No. 1382. This law protects them. More such laws are needed.

tlement and industrial development. Resettlement is suggested, because it will afford security, industry and production to the individual and to the country. Establishment of industries, settlement projects and corporations will not only take care of our reserve officers reverted into inactive status on a more permanent and productive basis, but will further encourage resettlement and economic development for our more deserving citizens.

The National Development Com-

pany (NDC) was created by the government with the aim of establishing new industries and as soon as the industry is established it is to be turned over to a private enterprise willing to undertake the job. It might be well for the National Development Company to start a project which can be turned over to stockholders composed of reserve officers and other deserving veterans using their back-pay certificates as payment for their share of stocks. To encourage further those who may be in-

terested, the corporation can be wholly manned by these reserve officers, guided initially by civilians who have better training and experience, considering that most of the reserve officers are professionals, engineers, agriculturists, chemists, lawyers and businessmen. Servicemen separated from the service will continue to be of service to themselves and to the country economically and industrially if they are encouraged to invest their money in the form of Back Pay to help in the country's economic development program. The hundreds of unemployed veterans will just be willing to work and the project they will run being capitalized with their own money (Back Pay) will encourage them to attain a successful business undertaking. The government can further help them by giving ample protection to their business in form of laws and other facilities within the capacity of our people.

Still other productive enterprises in commerce and industry can be encouraged if only the initial capital is given to our veterans, a capital not given free but payable out of their earnings or what are due them. We have the Agricultural, Cooperative, Credit and Financing Administration (ACCFA). The ACCFA can help very much by putting up the initial cash capital in exchange of benefits provided for under RA No. 804 and 897 otherwise known as the "Back Pay Laws." There are many veterans now out of the ser-

vice and still unemployed who are willing to start some sort of cooperative projects if only they can have some capital. Qualified veterans who are made stockholders using their Back Pay certificates of cooperatives started by the government agencies will welcome the opportunity to work and earn a decent living. This will be more permanent than giving them their yearly Back Pay dividends, which amount to a few pesos, and which the individual spends as soon as he receives his dividends check to keep him going for another few days while waiting and hoping to find some kind of work which oftentimes can not be had for a long long time.

Lt. Col. E. Duque in his article "A Need for an Arsenal", pointed out that a project of an arsenal can be self-supporting.

Our basic laws provide for a citizen army. Reserve officers, who are our key personnel in the building of our citizen army, deserve the laws benefiting them and our government can do more to encourage and help them in their chosen field of leaderships.



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