

FISH IN OUR TIME

By FRED D. MANALO

THE administration of President Ferdinand E. Marcos, now credited with several breakthroughs in its food production drive, may yet work another "miracle," this time in fish production. Marcos's original goal was to make the country self-sufficient in fish by 1972.

But according to a statement by Vice President Fernando Lopez, the Philippines has actually started exporting fish. This secures for the administration its second greatest achievement: that of developing this nation from fish-importing to a fish-exporting country. Previous to this, we have started exporting rice for the first time in our import-conscious history. Of course before all this we have been exporting our professionals and technicians to other countries. But that is another story.

The more relevant story is one of high irony. Consider: Filipinos are a rice-and-fish eating people. We have a shoreline twice as long as that of the United States. Our territorial waters are six times bigger than our land area of 144,000 square miles. We have miles of open seas and international waters waiting to be exploited by deep-sea fishermen. A large number of our countrymen derive their livelihood from fishing. Yet our fish production is low. Today, we produce only 72 per cent of our requirements and import the rest, including *apartheid* sardines from South Africa.

We have a veritable gold mine in our waters. We have barely tapped it. Tuna fishing, for example, is being exploited by only one commercial fishing firm. In other countries, scientists are already preparing synthetics and substitutes for such foodstuff as fish and meat because these resources are fast facing depletion. We do not have to consider such drastic steps. We have enough fish for our population.

There are heartening developments. The annual increase of fish production is estimated at 6 per cent. But to be able to achieve self-sufficiency, this rate should be upped to 15 or 20 per cent. The average production per hectare in freshwater fishing is from

350 to 500 kilograms. Experts say that with proper application of fish culture techniques, this could be increased to 3000 kilograms per hectare.

Indeed the prospects for increased fish production are great. We have 900,000 hectares of fresh-water areas and 700,000 hectares of swamp areas. However, only 140,000 or 20 per cent are fully developed. The remaining 80 per cent of fishing waters are waiting to be developed. By the administration's timetable, we should have a expected surplus in fish supply of 28,000 tons in 1972. It is also estimated that



expansion of the fishing trade by then would generate 500 new jobs in the public sector and 123,000 new employment opportunities in the private area.

There are a host of ills plaguing the fishing industry and which have contributed to its snail-pace development. These include lack of facilities and sufficient financing resources. A number of fishing areas are over-fished, largely due to the use of dynamites, poison and fine mesh nets. A new menace is water pollution by effluents and industrial wastes.

Lack of facilities such as ice plants and refrigeration plants restricted both deep-sea fishing and fish culture. Poor transportation systems, inadequate marketing conditions, lack of trained

manpower — these have had their adverse effects on the industry. Development in any field hinges largely on research but there has been a dearth of research in the fishing industry. There is also great need to expand the Philippine Fisheries Commission and turn it into a more competent body to safeguard and develop what is considered the second biggest industry in the country.

The administration has long recognized that the Filipino does not live on rice alone. Basic to his diet is fish, and there should be more fish — as well as vegetables and meat — on his dining table. The scoreboard in this area:

The Philippine Fisheries Commission has started a fisheries infrastructure program to provide the fishing industry with cheap ice and cold storage facilities in strategic fishing areas. Under this program, the PFC will establish 17 ice plants and cold storage plants throughout the country. President Marcos recently inaugurated the fisheries infrastructure projects at Mercedes, Camarines Norte, consisting of a 10-ton ice plant and cold storage, a shrimp and crab hatchery, a technological laboratory and a district fishery station.

Another plant of the 10-ton capacity which recently went into operation is located at Barugo, Leyte. This will take care of the ice needs of fishermen operating in the Visayas Sea, San Pedro Bay, Biliran Island, Carigara Bay, Samar Sea, Leyte Gulf, Camotes Sea and other fishing grounds in Eastern Visayas.

Other ice plants are now operating in strategic fishing centers in the country, among which are the 5-ton Ice Plant and Storage at Masinloc, Zambales and the 6-ton Flake & Cold Storage at Sagay, Negros Occidental.

By June this year, the 40-ton Ice & Cold Storage Plant at Taytay, Luminangcong, Palawan, will be in full operation.

The Board of Investments has also made fishponds and deep-sea fishing priority areas for government assistance. A fishing port is being constructed in Navotas which will be supplemented

VILLAREAL OUSTED AS LP HEAD

by the Greater Manila Terminal Food Market to serve as a major outlet for fresh food commodities, including fish.

President Marcos has similarly proposed the establishment of an action regional fishery research center in cooperation with other Asian countries and the U.S. government. The center will conduct basic and applied research on freshwater and brackish water fishery.

The Fisheries Commission will also continue to stock major lakes, swamps and other inland bodies of water with fry and fingerlings.

Increased credit assistance has also been extended to the private sector. The government has called for closer partnership between the government and private industry in the promotion of the fishing industry.

Last year, the government conducted workshops on fisheries and oceanography to accelerate fishing research and to identify areas in which science-based technology might be applied to stimulate the growth of the fishing industry. Seven training programs were also conducted on fishing methods and techniques.

The government campaign against dynamite fishing and water pollution has been stepped up. The administration is evolving a more comprehensive and realistic conservation program for the protection of fish and other marine resources.

We should apply our experience in rice production on the fishing industry. With the application of scientific techniques, improved tools and the utilization of trained manpower, we were able to increase significantly our rice production.

There are no limits to what we can do, as the gains of the past three years have pointed out. In the end, the miracles of this generation will not be the miracle rice or the expected miracle fish but the men of will and purpose who are capable of charting their own destiny. These include not only honest and sincere public employees, but also upright members of law enforcement agencies and a people concerned with the protection of the public good. The development of the fishing industry will come about through the collaboration of all these people. Then we shall have enough fish in our time. **PM**



Former Speaker Cornelio Villareal, once fondly referred to as "Mr. Liberal," emerged as the most dejected man in the recent Liberal Party meet (May 10) at the Manila Hotel where he was ousted as LP president. In his stead, the 630-man LP directorate installed Senator Gerardo Roxas whose father, together with the deposed leader and a few others, founded the Liberal Party. Villareal, embittered by the directorate decision, is reportedly not abandoning his position and plans to seek court remedies to press his claim. Photos above show huddling party leaders as they plotted moves to depose the long time LP head from the leadership of the party he not only helped found but for which he labored hard to make a major political party of the country that it is today. If he is not lucky, he may yet find himself a total outsider from the Liberal Party.