

# Education for Public Opinion

WHAT is the part that education and the teacher play in the creating, moulding, or affecting of public opinion? What are the schools and the teachers doing with their opportunities and responsibilities in moulding and directing public opinion in the right direction?

## The Teachers' Role

There are nearly thirty thousand teachers in the Philippines. We find the teachers not only in the big centers of population but also in the most remote barrios. The number of children reached by the teachers and the number of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters in the family of these children run into millions when we take into account that we have over one million children enrolled in the public schools today. You can see, therefore, what a tremendous power the schools and teachers can exert in the creating, moulding, or affecting of public opinion.

## Public Education and Literacy

The Monroe Survey Commission in its report in 1925 made the startling observation that we were getting only a Grade-Two education. During the ten years that followed through the extension of elementary education to the remotest barrio, we should have been able to raise the standard of this achievement. The 1903 Census reports less than 45 per cent of our population as being literate, or able to read and write English, Spanish, or the vernacular. The 1918 Census (15 years later) reports an increase to about 50 per cent and we have every reason to expect that in the next 15 years or in 1933, we should have increased this percentage to at least 60 per cent (some have put it at 70 per cent) of our total population over ten years of age. While

this is still low as compared with the percentage of literacy in countries like the United States, Japan, New Zealand, and the leading powers of Europe, we have every reason to feel happy over the progress made in this direction.

## Minimum Educational Goal

In several school divisions, the goal of barrio education has been set at establishing not merely a one- or two-grade school under one teacher in a one-room school, but a complete primary school in which two teachers are assigned, each of whom to a room, and each of whom to handle two grades. It seems this ideal should be the goal for the Philippines. In our present stage of political and economic development, it will be worth our while to formulate and execute a plan extending over a period of a five, ten, or more years whereby a complete primary school may be established in every community, rural or urban, capable of maintaining the necessary pupil attendance.

To me the only hope of having an intelligent public opinion is the raising of the cultural and educational level of our population to at least a fourth grade education. It will be then and only then that we can hope to bring about and maintain in the Philippines a governmental machinery, an economic structure, an educational system, and a social organization based upon the soundest of principles and brought about by an inform-

## Task of Training a Citizenry for Informed and Intelligent Followership Belongs to Public School Teachers

By

DR. MANUEL L. CARREON  
Member, National Educational Council

ed and an intelligent public opinion.

## Training for Followership

Dr. W. O. Bagley, outstanding American leader of educational thought, once said: "What America needs today is not a Mussolini, but the raising of the cultural and intellectual level of the American people to such an extent that they would not need the guidance, much less the dictatorship, of a Mussolini." Well may I say in this connection that what we need in the Philippines today is not only a wise, a judicious, a far-sighted, and an unselfish leadership, but also, far more important perhaps, an informed and an intelligent followership capable of setting up the right type of leadership to guide as in this momentous period of our national history.

Public school teachers have shown a wholesome interest not only in their professional growth but also in the economic and social problems of the community in which they live. Individually and collectively, public school teachers have manifested in more ways than one that they count and can be counted upon in the determination and solution of vital problems affecting them not only as teachers but also as private citizens. The task briefly outlined here, the task of training a citizenry for intelligent followership capable of expressing an informed and an unbiased public opinion is a task demanding urgent attention from public school teachers whether acting indi-

dually or organized collectively.

## Constitutional Provisions

Our Constitution provides for an adequate system of public education offering at least free primary instruction and citizenship training for adults. The responsibility of the school and the teacher is obviously two-fold; namely, to bring in every child of primary school age into the school, and secondly, to assist in a program of adult education that would drive home to our adult citizens the responsibilities of Filipino citizenship.

## The Teacher as Moulder of Public Opinion

It is in the latter where the teacher and the school can exercise a tremendous influence in the formation of a sound public opinion. By contacts with the children in the classroom, on the playgrounds, in the school programs, on excursions, and in other extra-curricular activities, by contact with the parents in parent-teachers meetings, in community assemblies, and on other occasions, the teacher can exert his influence in insuring that the people get a fair and accurate knowledge of the facts around them, and thereby help them form a public opinion that is both intelligent and independent.

Those who are in favor of centralized united action are tempted at once to advocate a uni-personalistic, oligarchic, autocratic, or dictatorial form of management. Those believers of the democratic ideal agree with Dr. Bagley that what a country needs is an enlightened public opinion, an enlightened citizenry that will be able to discriminate between right and wrong, between just and unjust, between good and bad. In this important task of creating the right type of public opinion and the right type of citizenry, the school and the teacher can play a significant