

THE PHILIPPINE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM: WILL IT SURVIVE AS A GREAT LIBERTARIAN RAMPART?

The role of the public school system in a free society cannot be underrated. Never will there be a more vicious threat to our democratic ideals if public education should be fettered and sectarian.

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While the Filipinos sleep, there is something going on in their country that eventually may spell the difference between a free people and a shackled people. The public school system in the Philippines is in danger of being so watered down from within and so discredited from without that someday the Filipinos will wake up and find too late that this great libertarian rampart has crumbled.

One report says that there are now more than 650 schools in the Philippines run by one powerful sectarian organization alone. While these sectarian schools increase in number and are meticulously strengthened, our public school system has progressively weakened in standard mainly due to lack of government appropriation. So much public money is spent—and maybe wasted and squandered — on projects and undertakings not so urgent or crucial as public education, and yet the people as a whole do not seem to be aware they possess great power to press the Congress to give the public schools a high priority in its budgetary atten-

tion even perhaps at the sacrifice of other forms of public services.

Once the initiative and control of education return to any one church (as of old) or to several churches of different persuasions, the minds of the people will be shaped toward an ecclesiastical orientations, promoting an interest inimical to the broad general interest of the nation. That means conformism and uniformism, and with these evils the familiar hand-maidens of superstition, exploitation, and oppression. A people reduced to that level have no chance in the world to reach a point of development beyond mere social adolescence. Which is why Filipino maturity is long in coming at all, or in fact has not yet come about for all the 400 years of Western encounter.

The hope of this country is the University of the Philippines as long as that institution remains free and non-sectarian. The public school system is an important part of that hope as long as the pressures to control it or thwart its pristine purposes by private groups — religious, econo-

mic, political — are vigilantly watched, resisted, and defeated. Further, that hope remains alive as long as the public demands with uncompromising urgency that the government give the public school system and the University of the Philippines increased budgetary support from year to year and sees to it that the Constitution regarding education is courageously implemented no matter what the reactionary forces do.

Let me repeat the warning: Take out the public school system and the University of the Philippines from the social scene, and the days through which Rizal lived and suffered will be here again before we know it; even if you do not take out these symbols of free institutions, but mere-

ly allow them to be weakened, as some forces are attempting to do, those Rizal days will come back just the same, though slowly and stealthily, but just as surely. You can bet on that!

Then when this country retrogresses because the thinking is *again dimmed* and the human personality is *again downgraded*, as of old, we will say with gnashing teeth to ourselves, "We deserve what we get because we were not smart enough to learn from the bitter labours of our great men of the past."

Remorse always comes later than the deed. History has taught this repeatedly, but I guess some people have to learn it many times and pay a heavy price before it sinks in.



Here & There (Cont'd)

NOLI ME TANGERE LODGE NO.
118, F & A M

One of the few lodges to install their officers for 1961 was the Noli Me Tangere Lodge No. 118, F & A M which held their installation of officers at Plaridel Temple on Dec. 7, 1960 with Brigadier General Alfredo M. Santos, (AFP), as the Guest Speaker. It being a public installation, it was well attended by a large number of friends, brethren, and members of the families of the members. Musical numbers were rendered by Profs. Regino Dano, Dimpna Clarin, and Mrs. Gudela C. Baltazar.

Officers elected and appointed to serve the Lodge in 1961 are: Cesar B. Aguilar, Worshipful Master; Cesar C.

Rillona, Senior Warden; Benito R. Mendoza, Junior Warden.

ROSARIO VILLARUEL
CHAPTER No. 2, OES

Conchita O. Ilagan, Worthy Matron; Victorino R. Floro, Jr., Worthy Patron; Josefina E. Esguerra, Associate Matron; Hilario G. Esguerra, Associate Patron; Pilar R. Gonzales, PM, Secretary; Victorina A. Uson, Treasurer; Elizabeth S. Piopongco, Conductress; Andrea V. Vallejo, Associate Conductress; Esperanza G. Martinez, Chaplain; Cristeta L. Alvarez, PM, Marshall; Lina C. Navia, Organist; Virginia R. Sack, Adah; Erlinda G. Alonzo, Ruth; Inez Z. Morgan, Esther; Gracia M. Elefano, Martha; Belen Q. Villanueva, Electa; Mary C. Spuler, Warder; Antonio Gonzalez, Jr., Sentinel.