

Mechanization of Agriculture in Our Vocational Schools

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MANY CRITICISMS have been leveled at the Philippine educational systems, both that of today and of yesterday. Some were constructive and helpful, but unfortunately, many of them were shot through with personal and other prejudices and some even bordering against accepted rules of professional ethics and protocol and consequently rendered a great disservice to the schools and to the country.

No educational systems of yesterday or the day before yesterday are or were perfect especially when judged from present-day social, economic and ethical standards, but all have made some definite contributions to education and to human progress.

An example of destructive criticism is an article appearing in the Manila Daily Bulletin which maintains that agricultural education based upon mechanized agriculture and utilizing expensive agricultural machinery is radically wrong solely because the average farmer cannot afford to purchase them. Furthermore, that such education should be limited to the method utilized and the tools found in the poor farmers home.

Nothing is mentioned with reference to the possibility of the use of cooperatively and community-owned heavy and expensive modern farm equipment.

Another similar and more recent article published severely criticizes

the MSA for purchasing modern equipment for the agricultural schools which is an indirect attack to the government's mechanized agricultural program and also indirectly affects all dealers in modern agricultural machinery. In other words, the future farmer would and should utilize excessively the same old one-handed plow that is the exact replica of the plow used in Egypt by farmers during the period of Tutankhamen.

Should we consign Philippine agriculture to an outmoded and substandard system of which would make it impossible for the country to compete with agricultural countries which do use new methods and modern mechanized equipment? Why step back into the dim and unscientific past?

Maria does not pound rice with sticks any more except in the most remote districts because the locally or cooperatively-owned rice mill is more economical and more labor-saving — relieves Maria from boredom, drudgery and backaches, preserves her health and opens to her avenues to more fruitful, more intelligent and more profitable labor.

Are our agricultural schools and colleges failures? Recently we received a letter from the International Labor Organization of Geneva which intend to send in April, next year, a group of 23 representatives of different countries to

see the agricultural schools and colleges of the Philippines. Let me quote: 'We selected Australia for the outstanding work which they are doing in trade and industrial education. We have selected Japan for their recent accomplishments in apprentice training and placement work in industrial plants, and we have selected the Philippines because we believe that it has the best system of secondary agricultural schools in the Orient and is, without any doubt, one of the best in the world.'

Let us now quote from another source, some one who is neither a Filipino nor an American. This was taken from a recent book entitled "The Pacific World," page 153:

"The system of free education provided to the people of the Philippines is more extensive than that found in any other colonial government, and the people have responded to it. This is substantiated by a comment made not so long ago by the district governor of Sandakan, British North Borneo, in reviewing the list of public officials in his area. At the head of each department was, of course, an Englishman; next below him came a Filipino; while lower in the list were Chinese and Malays.

When asked by a visitor why the Filipinos were given such preference, the governor replied: 'Because the American system of educating the Filipinos has done more for them than anything that we have done in our own colonies. The Filipinos, naturally intelligent, are better fitted to take responsibility than any other people available.'

With Filipino graduates from our agricultural colleges and schools in agronomy and animal husbandry and veterinary science and with graduates of the School of Forestry, leading in forestry activities, and with graduates of Philippine colleges of engineering, all in great demand in this neighboring country, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the words of the governor of North Borneo is an outstanding eulogy both to America and the Philippines and a proof that, with all of its supposed defects and shortcomings, it is after all not as bad as some prejudiced critics picture it to be. Some of our graduates of Muñoz and of Los Baños and the School of Forestry who are now employed in North Borneo would unhesitatingly say that they owe a lot to our system of agricultural and technical education, both secondary and collegiate.

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All membership fees (triennial) paid in the school year 1949-1950 had all expired last June 30, 1952.

Death aid remittances do not take effect unless you have paid your membership fee of ₱1.00 for the current year.

The present membership fee is ₱1.00 for every calendar year.

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