

THE FILIPINO TEACHER AND EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY

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Ours is more than a period of transition; it is an epoch. Less than two years ago there was a new birth of freedom in this corner of the Pacific which, only a short time before, was one of the centers of a global war. Education, and particularly the teachers, has been more instrumental than any other factor in hastening the day of our independence. It should be equally efficacious in helping to maintain that independence.

It has been truly said that, as the school so is the nation. And when we mention the school, we have in mind, not the building or school ground, but the teachers in whose hands the education of the children is entrusted. The responsibility and opportunity for useful social service that is the teacher's is not the privilege of everyone. For unlike the physician who has to deal with people when they are sick; the lawyer who must handle criminals and social diviates; the priest who must console or intervene for sinners; the teacher deals with healthy, innocent, and most lively children and youth at the prime of their age, when they are all hope, faith, and aspiration.

It is for this reason that teaching is not merely an occupation, and neither is it just a job with which to earn a living. It is vastly more than both. It is, above all, a mission which combines the lawyer's concern for justice, the physician's solicitude for the physical well-being of his patient, and the priest's passion for spiritual values. The reward of teaching is more than

prestige, and it is not all measured by the salary schedule. It lies deeply in the feeling of enduring satisfaction that comes as a result of having rendered the most useful social service. It is the kind of reward which makes teachers continue to teach even though they be underpaid and overworked, and sometimes abused. For teaching is its own reward, and no amount of money or the lack of money can corrupt it.

In the Philippines particularly, the teachers are the nation's most dependable public servants. They are invariably called upon to shoulder responsibilities that require absolute honesty and demand stick-to-itiveness and dependability. Teachers are the election tellers and inspectors as they are also the enumerators during the time of census taking. So when the teachers in Nueva Ecija and Davao resorted to the strike as a last measure to secure the justice that was due them, there was a chorus of comments beginning with the words: "Even the teachers..." But true to their tradition of dependability, the teachers did not abuse or misuse the strike. In fact, they listened to reason and returned promptly to work when they were assured that justice was to be done to them, for their paramount concern, after all, was not the bonus that they were promised, but the uninterrupted education of the children and youth under their care.

Mindful of the many social contributions and personal sacrifices of our teachers, the late President Roxas, his worthy successor, President Quirino,

and the members of Congress have wanted from the beginning of the present administration to do something concrete to manifest their deep appreciation. And at last, a bill has been passed which should serve as a milestone in the history of Philippine education. I refer to the bill, which I hope will be signed, which raises *very substantially* the minimum rates of compensation of teachers and other employees of the educational service. As you have probably read in the papers the minimum entrance salary of elementary teachers has been increased from P40 a month to P100; that of high school teachers, from P100 to P150 a month. The salaries of supervisors and superintendents have also been increased.

I have submitted for evaluation and comment of the PPSTA a bill which provides a proposed Charter for Teachers and Educators. It is intended to be the teacher's civil code or Magna Charta, as it were. After this CHARTER is issued in the form of an executive order, no one would dare trample upon the teachers' rights. They should thenceforth be treated as human beings with dignity and worth and given opportunities for self-expression and participation in the determination of school policies and in the preparation and evaluation of teaching materials.

Speaking of teacher participation in planning and policy making, it is my great hope that in the very near future our teachers will have the training, incentive, and time to engage in the study of and research in educational problems. As I read the books and pamphlets from the United States and other progressive countries which are the result of teachers' work there, I have a vision that, with proper leadership and encouragement, our teachers should be able to produce similar ma-

terial. We should be independent not only politically and economically but also intellectually and culturally. The results of studies and experiments abroad are unanimous in showing that there is no such thing as a superior race. I believe, therefore, that as a people we are blessed with as much intelligence and power of productive work as any other people on the face of the earth.

On the strength of this belief, I hope that our teachers will consider it a part of their duty to study constantly our educational problems. Educational objectives and principles should change as fast as the government philosophies progress. When Congress enacted the Education Act of 1940, we did not even dream that our country would become shortly the theater of a world war. In the short span of eight years, historical landmarks came into being: All kinds of newly invented fighting planes; the B-29; the "duck"; the radar; the atomic bomb; the United Nations; our liberation; the inauguration of the Republic, which is the fruition of our aspiration; rehabilitation—events that occurred swiftly one after another or simultaneously. But in the field of education, what happened? What adjustments have been made? The trip to San Francisco is now 29 hours instead of 21 days. A house can be set up in a day or so. We can go to Baguio in 45 minutes instead of six hours. Our farms are fast being mechanized and the industrialization program of the administration is about to start. Yet the school system, the agency that prepares the people for carrying out the program of activities of our government, has been left behind and is still on the carretela stage! Tragic, to say the least.

President Roxas, after the hectic job of insuring our primary needs, foresaw

the predicament of the nation if we neglected further the educational needs of our children. In his budget recommendation to Congress, he said in part:

"I desire to invite the attention of the Congress, however, to the fact that in the primary grades of our public schools the pupil stays in school now for only two hours and forty minutes. This is a result of the operation of what is known as the two-single-session program adopted in 1941 under the provisions of Commonwealth Act No. 586. Because of the short time available for instruction the time allotment for the different subjects of the curriculum had had to be reduced. Efficient teaching has become wellnigh impossible. As a result, the standards of elementary instruction have deplorably deteriorated. The extremely short sessions likewise keep the children out of school the greater part of the day. They make them susceptible to questionable influences which may tend to nullify the work done by the teacher."

He also saw two serious problems, to wit: "How to increase the holding power of the schools and how to decrease the proportion of repeaters. Of every 100 pupils that start in the first grade 55 drop out before reaching the fourth grade, and only 18 reach the sixth grade; of these only 1 ever finishes high school, and still fewer continue their education on the college level." These two problems arise from the handicaps under which the teachers work. Under the present system, a teacher who teaches two classes a day in the primary schools, or all the subjects in one class in the intermediate grades, certainly carries a load that is physically next to impossible. How then can she make her teaching attractive enough to hold her pupils long,

or effective enough to reduce the percentage of failure? We have in Manila a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; why not one for the prevention of cruelty to teachers?

I propose that we undertake a drive for the crystallization of public opinion in favor of school reforms. But first of all, let the teachers do some research work so that they would have concrete basis for whatever proposals they wish to make. Director Abada calls the high schools, "awful". Mr. Pañgilinan says, "They are a failure." Dr. Orata calls us a nation of second graders. But that is not enough. We must have the data. We must do the necessary tests and measurements to prove our claims.

In the U. S. the people cooperate closely with the teachers in the fight for improvement of education. Together they study the school situation and, together, they work out programs of improvement. Examples of how thoroughly they are interested in education are the following:

1. President Truman has a study being carried on by a Commission on Higher Education. Two reports in book form are already released.

2. The New York Times, through its Education Editor, Benjamin Fine, undertook a nationwide observation, and published a book called "Our Children are Cheated."

3. The United States Chamber of Commerce, through its Committee on Education, worked to secure better educational opportunities for children. It has two very helpful reports entitled:

"Education: An Investment in People" and "Education Steps Up Living Standards."

4. The American Federation of Labor is carrying on a campaign for "adequate public schools as the indis-

pensable foundation of a successful democratic society."

5. The Veterans of Foreign Wars waged a war against public indifference as the greatest obstacle to the establishment of educational opportunity.

6. Harvard University created a Research Committee in 1946 which published a book on its findings: "General Education in a Free Society."

7. The Commission on Teacher Education created by the American Council of Education (1938-1944) has two published volumes:

"Teacher for Our Times"; "The Improvement of Teacher Education."

I mentioned these to show the human resources available here that are awaiting to be mobilized. Congress has just created a joint committee to study our school system with a view to overhauling it. We intend to get to the roots of our chronic school troubles and hope to eradicate them. But Congress can not legislate the technical phase of education; that is the responsibility of the teachers. That needs as much care as the teaching in the classroom. And that means we must make all efforts to employ only qualified teachers.

With this in mind, I have prepared a bill which provides, among others, for the conversion of the Philippine Normal School into a teachers college which will grant bachelor's and mas-

ter's degrees to selected individuals who will become future leaders in elementary education. The College will be given facilities for research in elementary education. When established, you will have something to look forward to for further opportunities to continue your education and to prepare yourselves for still greater and wider educational service.

Teacher training is undoubtedly the greatest problem that our school authorities face today. We must do everything in our power to provide adequate facilities for teacher preparation to meet our yearly need for teachers. One of the most urgent changes, according to my own observation, is the creation of a teacher training office in the Department of Education. This office should take charge of the direction of all teacher training institutions, public or private. The standards required of all these institutions should be one and the same. Only upper-level high school graduates should be admitted into these schools. And the highest scholastic attainments should be imposed as requirements for the teaching service. We must do no less, for to improve teacher education is to improve the schools; to improve the schools is to strengthen the next generation; to strengthen the next generation is a social duty of the first magnitude.

(To be continued in the August issue)

