

Give Us This Day...

Continuous trouble in Nueva Ecija over title and treatment reflects the fact that the agrarian conflicts have not yet been solved. The great majority of laborers in the Philippines are busy raising the staple rice and agricultural export crops. With increasing literacy, more cines, well-stocked tiendas, to invite spending, the peasantry ask a larger share in the product of their toil.

According to the recently-promulgated Philippine tenancy law, in the absence of a written contract between landlord and tenant, the declaration of the latter shall be given greater weight. This is, of course, gentle persuasion of the hacendados so that another reaping will not bring a new crop of troubles. For there are enough already.

Title to small holdings presents the greatest difficulty. In its attempt to be just, the court must traditionally accept the written document as better evidence than the spoken word. If the records do not fairly present the picture, legitimate claims may suffer. A compensation offer to those who find they do not have legal title to their landholding is that of transplanting to Mindanao with government assistance. Naturally, this some peasants are loath to accept. The land they work is to them their home.

To tenant laborers, on the other hand, the crop is of first importance. Well-known is the predicament of the laborers in the season of scarcity. Then they mortgage their future returns so that they may have subsistence until the harvest. The report of the Bureau of Labor lists the causes of most tenant conflicts as



- Advances
- Farm expenses
- Rent
- Eviction
- Compensation for improvements made
- Irrigation charges
- Lowering of prices by landowners
- Use of a larger measure when tenants pay
- Refusal to liquidate tenants' shares
- Unwritten contracts.

Since the Philippines is largely agricultural, peace among the peasants is fundamental to the national concord. If tenants are seriously dissatisfied, their discontent might grow so much that actual danger to lives and property would follow. A wise paternalism has been shown by some landlords, and the results have more than justified their departure from the more customary treatment accorded tenants.

Government remedies vary with the particular causes of conflict. Best are those without compulsion, such as conciliation and mediation. Here the really peaceful temperament of the people serves as a rock on which agreement can be built.

Arbitration presupposes authority to make settlement on the part of the arbiter. Public opinion enters into the enforcement of any solution so reached.

The principle of collective bargaining is advocated by labor

leaders. This can readily be an educative means of explaining the fundamental problems to tenantry at large.

The basic causes have been attacked from many angles, by means of rural credit associations, the homestead act, usury legislation, cooperative marketing associations, the purchase of friar lands. Problems of administration seem to have handicapped such measures so that their full effect has not yet been seen. Only when the vast number of laborers have confidence in the helpfulness of disinterested officials, will the conflicts begin to subside. And subside they must, not only for the good of the peasantry, but as well for the peace of the land.

An ingrained evil of centuries does not disappear at the wave of the hand. When the agrarian problem is finally solved, the honors will be to many unnamed cogs in the machinery. Their contacts with the sons of the soil are the true means to the goal of just treatment. What years this process may take will require the utmost patience and persistence. For instance, the parceling of purchased friar lands has been going on since early American days. Commonwealth Act No. 32 governs disposition of such lands, with a corollary law of the National Assembly appropriating P75,000 for its administration. Preferential right of purchase is given to bona fide occupants, providing the holding is not more than 10 hectares. Such an occupant has 30 days, after receiving notice of the existence of his right, to make the 1st of 10 installment payments. Apparently coordination of government loans with these provisions furnishes a solution for a goodly number of such tenants.

The agrarian movement in the Philippines is, after all, a part of the world-wide discontent of working people under the existing economic order. The Scandinavian nations have demonstrated that an orderly and happy result can be secured, by adoption of a viewpoint that recognizes fully the modern situation. In Scandinavia ways have been found to enable young farmers to buy farms, livestock and equipment; and means for their education in the folk high school, with courses suited to their vocation, have been provided, the consequence being that Scandinavian peasants have been redeemed from indenturedship to the landgraves and estates are breaking up into small holdings—with no social disturbances, no confiscations. In the folk schools and in their practical cooperatives, the peasants learn the advantages of mutual effort to attain a common goal, but it all stems from the steps the governments have taken in giving the peasants secure tenure of the land and terms on which they eventually gain title to their acreages.

The Philippines, so fortunate in that food and clothing need not be imported, has in her landlord-tenant situation no insurmountable problem. The road may be steep, but it can be climbed without undue injury to anyone along the way. The national spirit seems willing. This year may reveal whether the flesh is weak.

Sixty-two Oldtime American Teachers...

wife, and the two have nothing to live on but his pension—which must have been cut at least 20%.

The sixty-two American teachers propose no case in court to validate their claim that the pensions on which they were retired were earned remuneration and as such should be restored to them by the Commonwealth. Their method, apparently, is to enlighten Washington about the matter and reopen proceedings with the Commonwealth on the basis of just grievance. They insist that the \$65,000 their full pen-

sions involve would be no special burden to a treasury overflowing with P3,000,000 surplus, as the Commonwealth treasury is—as officially reported. But they have a still stronger point in the fact that no pension would probably be paid during many years; at the average age of the teachers, their expectation of life would be counted by life insurance companies as about eleven years.

Still more emphatic is the fact that the United States, though lacking a treasury balance and with countless unusual claims upon its resources, has not moved to reduce any Fil-