

history, this help from the United States is more than welcome.

"E.C.A. aid will be used for what might be called stimulator projects, designed to set off a chain of other and even greater projects, spreading their benefits into the far corners of our economy.

"For example, the scientific use of irrigation and fertilizer will increase agricultural production very substantially. This will directly benefit farmers, who form the backbone of the country; it will enable them to earn more, to avoid resort to usurers, and to lift themselves out of poverty. But it will also benefit consumers, since increased supplies of agricultural products will be available at lower prices to the public, as well as for export to earn foreign exchange for our import needs.

"Or take power. Completion of power projects such as Maria Cristina and Ambuklao will electrify vast areas of country. The provision of power from new sources like these will bring electricity to great numbers of farm homes, enable businessmen to establish industrial plants in areas which have hitherto been wilderness, and give rural families an opportunity to supplement their farm incomes by working in cottage industries and by seeking employment in the new enterprises that spring up.

"Road-building is another instance of strategic investment. A road built into an unsettled area with the help of ECA materials will make that area accessible to pioneers. Settlement will be speeded up, overpopulated areas will be decongested, and the land problem will be eased. Agricultural production will rise. And the same roads which enable settlers to populate an area will in later years enable them to bring their products to market centers.

"Finally, let us not forget that private enterprise has an important role to play in our economic development; the Government cannot and should not do everything. As one spur to private investment the ECA program includes provision for the importation of producers' goods into the country. These producers' goods will be made available to local manufacturers, and will mean more jobs for local labor and eventually more finished products for consumers. They will help to conserve our dollar reserves. They will help to break bottlenecks that may occur in our development program.

"Thus, moderate amounts of ECA aid applied at strategic points in the economy will open the door to innumerable opportunities for advancing our own self-help measures. It is up to us, Government and people alike, to see to it that these opportunities do not go to waste."

The Report of the Advisory Committee on Urban Land and Housing Distribution

By F. CALERO

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I HAVE been asked by the editor of the American Chamber of Commerce *Journal* to summarize the Report of the Advisory Committee on Urban Land and Housing Distribution, of which I was appointed Chairman by the Administrator of Economic Coordination, Dr. Salvador Araneta. The Committee was appointed on February 28, 1951, and besides myself, the members were realtors A. B. Aquino, Teodoro Kalaw, Jr., R. O. Subido, and A. U. Valencia. All of us are members of the Manila Realty Board and we accepted our appointments as a call for public service.

We proceeded on the basis of a study of the system of land ownership in the Philippines, from which system so many of our present ills are derived. We studied the laws creating the People's Homesite Corporation and the National Housing Corporation, both enacted during the administration of the late President Quezon as a part of his social justice program. The two entities were merged in the People's Homesite and Housing Corporation by the late President Roxas (Executive Order No. 93, October 4, 1947). This year, under Executive Order No. 399 (January 5), providing for uniform charters for government corporations, the purposes of the Corporation, which has an authorized capital of ₱15,000,000, were formulated as follows:

"(a) To acquire, develop, improve, subdivide, lease, and sell lands, and construct, lease, and sell buildings or any interest therein in the cities and populous towns of the Philippines with the object of providing decent housing for those who may be found unable otherwise to provide themselves therewith;

"(b) To promote the physical, social, and economic betterment of the inhabitants of the cities and populous towns of the Philippines by eliminating therefrom slums and dwelling places which are unhygienic or unsanitary and by providing homes at low cost to replace those which may be so eliminated;

"(c) To provide community and institutional housing for destitute individuals and families and for paupers;

"(d) To acquire large estates under such terms and conditions as may be advantageous to the public interest, for their subdivision and resale to bonafide occupants; and

"(e) To exercise the right of eminent domain for the purposes for which the Corporation was organized."

After a study of these and other laws and executive orders relating to the subject of urban land and housing we looked into the different phases of the actual operations of the entities concerned, Dr. Araneta having requested all government corporations and offices under the Office of Economic Coordination, particularly the People's Homesite and Housing Corporation, to extend the usual courtesies and cooperation to the Committee in the performance of its work.

In a short article such as this, I think it best to summarize what the Report has to say under the headings "Comment" and "Recommendations".

Under "Comment":

(1) The Rural Progress Administration, in taking over some urban landed estates in Manila and the adjoining towns of Malabon and Baclaran, made no attempt to eliminate the slums and, in fact, subdivided the estates into smaller lots than those prescribed as minimum by the National Urban Planning Commission for private subdivision projects. The RPA made no improvements in any of the subdivisions and yet in nearly all cases charged prices almost the same or even in excess of what private subdividers would have charged under the circumstances.

(2) The squatter problem in Manila as well as in many other urban centers is a serious one, and the situation is worsened by the failure of the police agencies to stop illegal construction.

(3) Illegal construction in Manila, Quezon City, Pasay City, and elsewhere is resorted to in many cases because of the difficulties and complexities involved in securing official building permits and the rigid requirements in the various city ordinances with respect to the height and dimensions of rooms, size of structural members, etc., even in the case of small houses. Many of these requirements are obsolete, and there is too much red tape.

(4) A substantial portion of the lands held by the Philippine Homesite and Housing Corporation has been immobilized because of reservations made by the NUPC; there is need for action with respect to disposing of these large tracts of idle land.

(5) The price of lots sold by the PHHC has been so low as to leave a substantial profit margin for speculators who in many cases have purchased some of the best lots with the intention of reselling them. The price-setting has been haphazard with entirely too small a differential between front and back lots.

- (6) The capital structure of the PHHC was found sound.
- (7) However, there has been some delinquency in the payment of instalments and rentals.
- (8) There has been no provision made in the books of the Corporation for bad debts and they therefore do not reflect the true financial condition.
- (9) The operations of the PHHC are not carried out in a truly businesslike manner. It would be proper to preserve the autonomy of the management from outside interference, political or otherwise.
- (10) The salaries of some of the officials and of the employees and laborers of the PHHC are too low.
- (11) The Committee has included as an appendix to its report a valuable article, "Slum Clearance for Destitute Families", by C. M. Hoskins, and adopts his recommendations in this respect as the Committee's own.
- (12) The PHHC could engage in the building of low-cost housing for rental purposes on a larger scale to accommodate low-income families which cannot afford to pay instalments toward the purchase of houses and lots.
- (13) A reorganization of the present board of directors of the PHHC would be in order and a good set-up would include a representative of the President of the Philippines, representatives of the Department of Labor and the Department of Finance, an architect or construction engineer, two realtors, and a homeowner.

While a number of implied recommendations are included in the foregoing, a separate section of the Report, under the heading of "Recommendations", lists the following:

- (1) That urban lands acquired by the Rural Progress Administration be turned over to the Philippine Homesite and Housing Corporation.
- (2) That much of the idle land of the Diliman Estate be developed for leasing to the people who are now squatters in Manila and neighboring urban areas; that squatting in the Diliman area be prevented by forceful measures, but that certain areas be set aside for squatters to stay temporarily.
- (3) That the procedure of issuing building permits be simplified and the building ordinances of Manila be immediately revised; that a National Building Code, applicable to all cities and towns be enacted as soon as possible, and a joint committee composed of members of the Philippine Society of Civil Engineers and the Philippine Institute of Architects be formed to draft such a code.
- (4) That the area within the quadrangle in Quezon City bounded by North Avenue, East Avenue, South Avenue, and West Avenue, be developed immediately and be made available to all classes either for rent or sale instead of holding it in reserve for other government purposes.
- (5) That a reappraisal of properties be made in accordance with market values so as to discourage speculation; profits should go to the PHHC instead of to middlemen.
- (6) That not more than one lot be sold to an individual for residential purposes.

- (7) That the terms and conditions of contracts be strictly enforced.
- (8) That an adequate reserve be set up for bad debts, especially in the low-cost housing projects.
- (9) That the management adopt a businesslike policy.
- (10) That a thorough revision of salary and wage scales be made.
- (11) That housing for destitute (as distinct from low-income) families be given consideration.
- (12) That low-cost housing projects for rental purposes be undertaken on a larger scale.
- (13) That the board of directors have as members two realtors and a homeowner, and merely political appointments be avoided.

Under "Special Recommendations", the Report lists:

- (1) That the forthcoming ECA aid be partly spent in slum clearance in Manila and other populous centers, through the agency of the PHHC.
- (2) That arrangements be devised for large land holders in Manila to exchange their holdings for other lands, through the offices of the PHHC.
- (3) That the present substandard dwellings in the slum areas be demolished as the people inhabiting them are transferred to the housing presently under construction which, it is estimated, will take care of some 2,000 families.
- (4) That all public lands in the cities, foreshore areas, reclaimed esteros and river beds, etc., intended for housing projects, be turned over to the PHHC for development, instead of disposing of them piecemeal to speculators.
- (5) That veterans be given special consideration by the Government as to housing.

Under the heading "Closing Remarks", the Reports states that the Committee had to complete its work within two months, though the assignment deserved much more time, but that it had tried to live up to the tenets of the realtors' Code of Ethics which declares:

"Under all is the land. Upon its wise utilization and widely allocated ownership depend the survival and growth of free institutions and our civilization. The Realtor is the instrumentality through which the land resource of the nation reaches its highest use and through which land ownership attains its widest distribution. He is a creator of homes, a builder of cities, a developer of industries and productive farms."

"Such functions impose obligations beyond those of ordinary commerce; they impose grave social responsibility and a patriotic duty to which the Realtor should dedicate himself."

The Committee closes its Report by expressing the hope that it will help to improve housing conditions, especially for the under-privileged and the destitute.

FREEDOM! thou art not, as poets dream,
A fair young girl, with light and delicate limbs,
And wavy tresses gushing from the cap
With which the Roman master crowned his slave
When he took off the gyves. A bearded man,
Armed to the teeth, art thou; one mailed hand
Grasps the broad shield, and one the sword; thy brow
Glorious in beauty though it be, is scarred
With tokens of old wars; thy massive limbs
Are strong with struggling. Power at thee has launched
His bolts, and with his lightnings smitten thee;
They could not quench the life thou hast from heaven;
Merciless Power has dug thy dungeon deep,
And his swart armorers, by a thousand fires,

Have forged thy chain; yet, while he deems thee bound,
The links are shivered, and the prison-walls
Fall outward; terribly thou springest forth,
As springs the flame above a burning pile,
And shoutest to the nations, who return
Thy shoutings, while the pale oppressor flies.

Oh! not yet
Mayst thou unbrace thy corslet, nor lay by
Thy sword; not yet, O Freedom! close thy lids
In slumber; for thine enemy never sleeps,
And thou must watch and combat till the day
Of the new earth and heaven.

—From William Cullen Bryant's "The Antiquity of Freedom" (1842).