

Episcopal Documents

A LETTER TO THE C.C. DELEGATES OF PALAWAN ¹

Bishop's Residence
Puerto Princesa
Palawan
August 30, 1971

Delegates for Palawan
Constitutional Convention
Puerto Princesa City

Honorable Sirs:

Greetings in the Lord. Our country is at the juncture of an important twist in history. The nation has elected delegates to entrust unto them the sublime work of carving for them a better tomorrow by enshrining their noble aspirations in a body of permanent and immutable fundamental laws. Much depend on you. We look with anxious eyes on every turn, decision and step you make. We long and pray for your success. Your success will be ours, your failure, likewise, ours. May God bless you all and illumine your minds to see what is good for our country.

In passing allow me to point out that one issue raised in the campaign in Palawan by the citizenry, the Catholics in particular — spear-headed by the Holy Name Society — was that of Profit Sharing for the working class. It is not a hidden secret that some "Blocks", or interested groups in our Philippine society have heavily lobbied in Congress to block the bill on Profit Sharing. I was sad to see so many of our Congressmen succumb to the pernicious temptations of financial offers

¹ The two delegates from Palawan are Hon. Alfredo Abueg, Jr. and Hon. Jose N. Nollado.

by lobbyists of the "Blocks" or Vested Interest Groups. It was, likewise, sad to see some in the mass media sector pipe to the tune of this attempt to block a legitimate aspiration of the Filipino people from acquiring a legislative backing. In fact, articles were published trying to obscure and diminish the meaning and importance of this aspiration of the Filipino people.

Profit Sharing is a legitimate aspiration of our Filipino people. Our people have always aspired to share in the produce of their labor. Since time immemorial that drive was in them. In the colonial days they fought for it, and even shed their blood for it. In recent times the din of their clamor has been deafening, except for those who are already deaf by virtue of their greed. Being a legitimate aspiration of our Filipino People, and the Constitution being the codification of the aspirations of our people, Profit Sharing should be included in our constitution, probably in a special Article of Rights for Labor.

Another thing that should be born in mind is the supremacy of the individual over the state and its institutions. The State and its institutions exist for the individual to help him acquire his legitimate aspirations and well being. The State should not be so over-powering as to curtail human freedom or frustrate individual or private initiative. The role of the State as a subsidiary agency to the supremacy of the individual should be clearly defined. As of present one of the most radical mistakes of our Political System is that the State in our Society has assumed a role far above its proper nature. Instead of helping, it has been the cause of hindering development and progress by producing an atmosphere adverse to the supremacy of the individual. Often the State has harassed and antagonized private initiatives. This must be corrected. Any step or action of the State that will harass or hinder private endeavor already established in any sector of our society must be declared unconstitutional. The State must be committed to help and subsidize private institutions already established, and not to supplant them by making existence for them difficult or penal thereby forcing them to close.

For these past years, we have seen a ferment brewing in our Philippine society — that of decentralization of the national government, its functions, offices and departments. The

trend of centralization is an antiquated societal structure of our colonial days. It was useful, then, for the foreign powers in order to control the entire national polity thereby insuring the aliens apogee of their hegemony. This structure has been always adverse to native initiatives. It was an unjust burden imposed on our people by ruthless, callous and cruel foreigners. It served their purpose, but it was onerous to our people. It has contributed to many anomalies and graft in our government. A flagrant example of this colonial structure is that the Local Provincial Government has no footing in our present Constitution. One could easily conceive them as "arms" of a remote "king" or "head of State" or even a "Dictator", and not the legitimate expression of the desire of the people from the outside, and not sprouting from their legitimate desire to form government. The Local Provincial Government vis-a-vis with the National Government must have a strong footing in the Constitution. Likewise, the interrelation of the two entities must be clearly defined in terms of the principle of subsidiarity.

This decentralization of the centralized departments and bureaus of the National Government may put an end to many anomalies and corruption in our present institutionalized system. Many abuses and graft from the government employees have arisen because our institutionalized structure have given them the opportunity to sprout and grow. Our institutions are such that they produce the environment and atmosphere conducive for abuse. An example is the present land grabbing problem. It could be minimized if the Bureaus of Forestry and Land be decentralized to the provincial level. Then people in the provinces can easily work for the processing of their land papers, can complain affectively of abuses of land grabbing, and also the government agencies can easily avoid mistakes in allocating lands already cleared by poor people. Su much blood shed can be avoided by a simple institutional change in structure.

Another example of an onerous and unjust centralization is the Bureau of Prisons. By centralizing our penal system, then a few provinces — one of them our beloved Palawan — have to pay for the crimes committed in other provinces. Decentralization of this institutionalized structure is a felt need in our province. May both of you prove true sons of Palawan.

Finally, something effective must be done with sincerity to stop graft and corruption in our government. Many policies have been designed by the public sector. All of these failed because the law was never meant to succeed. It never had the sanctions and mechanics designed to be effective. Something must be done before our people completely lose faith in our present system and look for remedies in another system. One step towards this direction would be to put proper checks in our constitution in the Article on appropriation of the people's money. As it stands in our present constitution, the House of Representatives has been given complete and absolute power in the appropriation of the people's money. As experience has shown us, the money has not always been appropriated according to the pressing needs of the people. To remedy this anomaly, probably it would be helpful to assign priorities in the appropriation of the people's money according to the needs of the people. Probably these needs would take into consideration housing, education, health, road construction, economic development, peace and order, etc. Barring the state of war, these priorities should be met by the annual budget according to specified percentage of priorities.

Being not an expert in law. I can only furnish you with the insights of a novice. There are more things that our country and people need. More experienced views could be furnished. But if these four aspects of our present day society herein suggested would be taken of, probably our country would make big strides in the proper direction.

I hope for your success in the convention. Your success is ours also. May God bless you. Taking this opportunity to greet your honor, we remain.

In Christ Jesus,

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Bishop of Palawan