

Church and Community

Vol. VII, No. 1 January-February, 1967

CONTENTS

- 3 EDITORIAL
- 4 INDUSTRIALIZATION CHALLENGES CULTURE
By Jose P. de Jesus
- 12 PERSONALISM VERSUS EFFICIENCY
IN BUSINESS
By Fr. Jaime C. Bulatao, S.J.
- 17 TENSIONS OF THE RISING FILIPINO
MIDDLE CLASS
*Panel Presentation by Mary Hollnsteiner,
E. P. Patanñe, and Richard P. Poethig*
- 22 CULTURAL CHANGE AMONG IGOROTS
IN MINING COMMUNITIES
By William Henry Scott
- 28 NEEDED — A NEW IMAGE OF LABOR
By Richard P. Poethig
- 32 ENCOUNTER

Acting Editor: EUNICE B. POETHIG

Artists: DANI AGUILA

Business Manager: LUDOVICO S. AGULTO

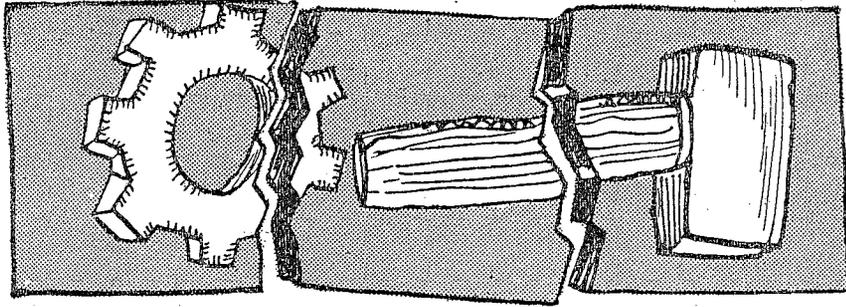
Editorial Board: The staff of the Division of Social Concerns of the United Church of Christ: Dick V. Fagan, Rural Life; Richard P. Poethig, Industrial Life; Alex J. Grant, Social Work and Fern Babcock Grant, Faustino P. Quiocho, Acting Director. Church and Community has been approved as supplementary reading by the Bureau of Private Schools and the Bureau of Public Schools.

Rates: Subscriptions in the Philippines are ₱1.50 for one year or ₱2.50 for two years. Subscriptions sent abroad are U.S. \$1.00 per year. Copies of individual issues: ₱0.40 for single copies; ₱0.35 each for 5 to 19 copies; and ₱0.30 each for 20 or more copies. Checks and money orders should be made payable to the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

Solicitors: Persons who secure three annual subscriptions at ₱1.50 (or \$1.00) each will be given a fourth subscription at no additional cost.

Church and Community is published bi-monthly by the Department of Public Welfare, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, 939 Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (Highway 54), Quezon City. Address correspondence to P. O. Box 718, Manila. Telephones: 9-62-41 and 9-39-13. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the Manila Post Office on May 8, 1964.

Needed--



A New Image of Labor

In 1960, the three-year program for Philippine National Development included this statement: "One of the major resources of the country is its manpower. Upon its development and proper utilization depends, to a great extent, the development of the country."

The utilization of manpower in reaching national goals depends largely upon the recognition of Philippine labor's part in national development. To speak of labor's part in national development is to assume that labor is accepted as an integral part of the Philippine economy. Unfortunately, the major roadblock in the way of labor's full participation in national development, and in its discovering of a national purpose, is the fact that labor has a negative image in the Philippines—among both leaders and ordinary citizens. The image of labor does not have to be negative, for within a Christian nation the basic beliefs of the Christian faith should provide for a healthy understanding of labor and of its role within the nation.

MANUAL LABOR "A CURSE"

THE TERM "LABOR" in most countries is associated with manual work, and manual work is regarded with low esteem. Within Asian societies, those who work with their hands are relegated to the lower rungs of the social ladder. The long fingernail, a carry-over from Chinese society, symbolizes the pride of a man who does not have to work with his hands. The jeepney driver who wears a long thumbnail may

Richard P. Poethig, Program Director, Industrial Life and Vocation, United Church of Christ in the Philippines. This article is adapted from "A Religious Approach to a National Purpose for Philippine Labor" which appeared in *Solidarity*, July-September, 1966.

not know why he does so, but, paradoxically, he is reinforcing the disdain with which men regard manual labor.

In the Philippines the man at the bottom of the ladder is the farmer. The low regard for manual work has been perpetuated through him. The farmer has subsisted for so long at his farming that he has no sense of having an occupation. Sociologists point out that since so few farmers earn a living from their work, farming is not considered a *hanap-buhay*. The poverty associated with the farmer's status has implanted the belief that manual work is a curse. Thus the ambitious man seeks to rise above the need to work with his hands. Bruno Lasker suggests that

...in the Philippines, anyone whom industry, thrift, or luck had placed in possession of money almost invariably invested it in land and thus changed his social status. To engage in any kind of physical labor would have held down his social position. The process of industrialization thus was greatly handicapped not only by the export of potential capital, but also by the absence of a class of manual workers who, when successful, would invest their savings in technical training for themselves or their children and thus build from the ground up enterprises of growing complexity. Instead, the successful man became an *ilustrado* whose son, if of a progressive frame of mind, might prepare himself for a career of industrial management or teaching, but always with a view to functioning in the office or the classroom, never in the shop.¹

This negative image of work presents a challenge to Philippine labor. One of its primary tasks in developing its own national purpose is to change the attitude associated with manual labor in the Philippines.

THE BIBLICAL VIEW

AT THIS POINT we need to see the meaning of work from the point of view of the Christian faith. Our Judaeo-Christian heritage has a healthy appreciation of work. In the Scriptures, work is ordained by God for all men. Work is not despised, but is seen as a necessary part of life. The position of St. Paul, who worked with his hands as a tent-maker even as he traveled on his missionary journeys, is quite clear on this. He writes to early Christians: "If anyone will not work, then he should not eat." Work is a fact of life. In order to live we must make the earth yield its rice for our food, its iron ore for our machines, its cotton for our clothes. Only as a man expends his energy on the land or in the factory can he meet his own and his neighbor's needs. Work in the Christian view also has a social meaning—it is a means of providing for community needs. Subsistence farming runs against the grain of the Christian view of work. Work is to be organized for higher pro-

¹ Quoted by C. Hunt in *Sociology in the Philippine Setting*. Hunt, Collier, et al. Manila: Alemar's, 1954, p. 330ff.

duction and the fruits of work to be distributed so that the common life of men may be benefited.

In the command to work, the Scriptures do not give special status to any particular type of work. In the Biblical view, a man is valued by his being made in the image of God, not by the kind of work he does. There is no pyramid of occupations which places the professional or the man of wealth above the artisan or the farmer. God chooses his kings, his prophets, and his apostles from among farmers, shepherds, and artisans as well as from among courtiers. When he becomes incarnate, he presents himself as a carpenter's son. In the face of a culture which has looked down upon manual labor as undignified and which has given pre-eminence to an aristocracy which is freed from working with its hands, there is need to reassert the biblical understanding that in the eyes of God there is no hierarchy of work. It is as Philippine labor regains this Christian view of work, that it can rediscover its own dignity.

In helping Philippine labor discover its dignity, religious groups have the responsibility for changing the attitude of people toward manual work. In the past, both Protestants and Roman Catholics have reinforced rather than broken down the hierarchical understanding of work. They have supported the hierarchical social structure which places manual labor at the bottom of society. It is interesting to note that Protestantism, which has historically laid great emphasis upon a doctrine of work, failed to make itself heard on this issue in the Philippines. Most Protestants still hold the attitude toward manual work that prevails in the nation. Manual labor needs to be raised in the eyes of the people; the churches have a primary responsibility in fulfilling this task.

EFFECT OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY

THE MAJOR ALLY OF RELIGION in breaking down the negative attitude toward labor is modern technology itself. Modern technology introduces change to older social structures. It creates new jobs for which there is no clear-cut place on the traditional evaluation scale. In a traditional society, the ranking of men by their occupational status is hard and fast. Every man has his place in the society. With the coming of industrial society new criteria have to be developed to evaluate industrial occupations. Work in industrial society is essentially manual, but many industrial jobs have a high prestige value in the contribution they make to the industrial development of the nation. Thus industrialization can provide the basis for a reevaluation of manual labor. It can be said that unless this reevaluation does take place and there is a change of attitude toward manual labor, the industrial progress of the Philippines is endangered.

If labor is to have a place within Philippine society, then labor's contribution to national development needs to be recognized alongside that of management, the professions, and the technicians. Among the general public this needs to be done through a systematic publicity campaign. One sees very few posters, advertisements, or reading materials which declare the importance of labor's contribution to the nation. But if a basic change in attitude is to occur it must begin early within the educational system. There is a great deal of ambivalence toward labor in the Philippine educational system. The large majority of the children in the public schools come from families of farmers or working men. And yet the educational system is geared toward a white collar society. Education becomes a means of social mobility—a movement away from manual labor. Within the school system there is a disdain for labor. It can be seen in the teacher who in one breath will extoll the dignity of labor, and in the next breath threaten to send an erring student "home to plant camotes."

The public education system, as it developed under the American administration, laid emphasis on the industrial arts. In the early years industrial training received popular support. But the basic drive to rise above manual skills was stronger, and vocational training has suffered as a form of second class education in the Philippines. To change this trend, Philippine labor needs to be heard in educational circles. Philippine labor's concerns need to be incorporated in those plans for manpower development which seek to develop skills associated with industrialization. This will also mean that Philippine labor will have to look within its own ranks to discover and develop those men who can contribute to the development of educational policy for economic growth.

One further effect of technological development in changing the image of labor is the emphasis it lays upon a new type of work community. Essential to technological development is the recognition of the need for close relationship between manual, technical and managerial skills in industry. Industry cannot afford a hierarchy of occupations which builds walls between those who work with their brains and those who work with their hands. Modern industry requires a work community in which the manual worker, the technical worker, and the manager work together across occupational lines. In the West, modern technology evolved out of this new work community. The early beginnings of American industry were founded upon the work of men such as Edison, Ford, the Wright Brothers, who combined manual skills and inventive insight. If Philippine labor is to become an integral part in national development, the ground must be prepared for labor to assume its place in the new work community evolving in the Philippines.