

OPENING REMARKS

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Chairperson, 1980 PSS National Convention

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Convention Committee, I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the 1980 National Convention of the Philippine Sociological Society. Our co-sponsors for this activity are the U.P. Institute of Social Work and Community Development; the U.P. College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Sociology; the Philippine Social Science Council; and the UNESCO. We gratefully acknowledge their enthusiastic support and assistance.

For this year's Convention, we focus on the theme "The Filipino Peasant in the Vortex of Development" in recognition of the central role that peasants play in national development. In a country such as ours where agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, whatever affects the farmer invariably affects the whole populace.

We can thus contend that in a predominantly agricultural society, the economic conditions of the peasants would be an approximate gauge of the level of economic development attained by that society. What, we may then ask, are the broad contours of the development profile in the country today?

Conventional social forecasters would venture to say that the over-all development picture appears rosy. At the other end of the spectrum, however, are those who would contend that the levels of poverty have not diminished, but worse, that conditions have deteriorated, and that the deteriorating rural landscape is rendered even more bleak by marked rural-urban inequalities and disparities.

Past meetings of the Society gave much emphasis on urban problems, understandably because metropolitan-based annoyances constitute a great part of our daily realities — traffic and congestion, pollution, high prices, brown-outs and slum proliferation. The latter serves as a constant reminder of our rural links since the phenomenon is an offshoot of the impoverished rural tao seeking "greener pastures" in Manila.

During this convention we shall endeavor to look at conditions "Beyond Manila," for as our colleague Dr. Castillo aptly puts it: "We are a nation of villages and villagers, Manila's skyline notwithstanding." We are well aware that countryside development emerged as the key phrase of the 1970s with the establishment of a new political order and the passage of the Agrarian Reform Act, bringing in its wake numerous programs for the Filipino farmer. This represented a radical and dramatic shift from the preceding decade when apathy and neglect of the past served to fuel the growing unrest and militancy. Today, in contrast, we find the farmer quite confused and bewildered by an array of development and productivity-oriented programs, planned and implemented by various government and non-government agencies and designed to propel the peasant into the mainstream of modernization.

The beneficial, as well as adverse, effects of these programs, whether intended or not, will be the subject of our discussions and analyses today and tomorrow. Twenty-one speakers of different persuasions will present their views, experiences and studies on many aspects of peasant life. We in the PSS have tried our best to organize an eclectic smorgasbord of ideas, ranging from a conceptual overview of types of peasant communities, historical and socio-anthropological perspectives on the peasantry, to macro and micro-views and analysis of rural development strategies of government. We shall take a close look at the

effects of modern institutions and practices on the peasant and make an even more incisive examination of capitalist penetration into agriculture. We shall end on a note of hope as we reflect on experiences in peasant organization and participation, and gain insights into the peasants' becoming the

subject not the mere object of development.

To all participants, colleagues, friends and guests, welcome and may you derive satisfaction and inspiration from this two-day discussion on the Philippine peasantry.