

THE 1988 PSS CONVENTION IN RETROSPECT

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The 1986 Convention of the Philippine Sociological Society (PSS) was held despite apprehensions that it would not push through. The most serious apprehension had to do with funds. The P40,000 earmarked by the Society for the convention was reduced in half to meet other financial obligations, and the P75,000 support expected from the Ford Foundation did not materialize. Fortunately, the Asia Foundation came to rescue and committed P35,000 to bail the Society out, but none of the money came until the afternoon of the first convention day. The Convention Committee at Central Philippine University (CPU) had to raise P15,000 on their own to settle the necessary arrangements. Owing to these difficulties, the 1986 PSS Convention was held on April 9 and 10 of the following year, 1987. As Dr. Luis Lacar, PSS President, remarked in his opening speech, "Holding this conference is actually an act of extreme faith."

Setting and Participants

The beautiful 24-hectare campus of CPU was made the setting of camaraderie and intellectual intercourse among many of the country's social scientists. From far and near, 141 delegates from 28 public and private institutions, academic and research, trooped to CPU; some of them were even accompanied by family members. The convention participants were predominantly female, with only 37 males. Their geographical distribution was as follows: Luzon, 20; Visayas, 73; and Mindanao, 48.

Activities

The first day of the convention started with the registration of participants at 8:00 a.m. An hour later, the *Pambansang Awit* was sung followed by an invocation given by Dr. Johnny V. Gumban, the CPU chaplain. Dr. Lacar, incumbent PSS president, then formally opened the convention. He was followed by CPU President Dr. Agustin A. Pulido and OIC

Governor of Iloilo Hon. Simplicio Griño, both of whom welcomed the participants to CPU and the City of Iloilo.

The convention's keynote speaker, Sec. Lourdes R. Quisumbing, one-time president of the Society, did not make it to the convention. Thus, after a short morning break, the participants reassembled to listen to Dr. Cynthia Bautista, PSS vice-president, who reported the main findings of her survey on the status of the teaching of sociology in the Philippines. Her report covered the basic characteristics and teaching backgrounds of the survey respondents, selected data about the participating schools and most importantly, the problems confronting teachers handling sociology courses. Her findings more or less tallied with the results of the pre-consultative workshops in three regions of the country; these findings will be presented in the latter part of this report.

After an open forum on Dr. Bautista's report, three sociologists presented the results of their consultative workshops. Dr. Ruben Chavez Jr. of Silliman University spoke for the Visayas group, Dr. Teresita Maquiso of Central Luzon State University represented the Luzon group, and Dr. Lacar presented for the Mindanao group. Another open forum followed, this time punctuated with howls of disagreement and laughter as participants searched for ways and means to make the teaching of sociology relevant to contemporary Philippines.

During the afternoon session of the first day, representatives from two research consortia, The Visayas Research Consortium (VRC) and the Eastern Mindanao Area Research Consortium (EMARC), both under the wings of the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC), reported on their accomplishments, and on the possible uses of their research to the teaching of sociology. VRC coordinator Fr. Theodore Murane, SVD, of San Carlos University spoke first, followed by his EMARC counterpart, Ms. Lourdes Mamaed of the Ateneo de Davao University. After an open forum and a short break, a multi-media approach in teaching sociological concepts was presented by Ms. Myrna Tesoro assisted by Mr. Rose Asong.

During the evening, the conventioners were regaled with songs, dances and a pageant prepared by the Cultural Show Committee headed by Mr. Danilo Gamo of the CPU English Department.

The second day of the convention started with a "singspiration," after which Dr. Jessica C. Salas of the CPU Graduate School oriented participants on the scheduled workshops for the day. The conventioners broke up into four groups, each one tasked to list recommendations to minimize, if not eradicate, the problems in the teaching of sociology. A plenary session featuring the workshops' outputs followed. After lunch, the PSS officers conducted its business meeting. The closing ceremony was held later that afternoon. Engr. Aurora Alerta-Lim of the CPU College of Engineering emceed the affair and Prof. Ruben F. Trinidad, PSSC Executive Director, distributed certificates of attendance.

Major Issues

As mentioned earlier, the major issues that emerged from the pre-convention regional consultative workshops generally tallied with the findings of Dr. Bautista's study. These issues may be grouped as follows:

1. Student-related issues:
 - a. poor quality of students
 - b. large class sizes (50 or more)
 - c. low communication and reading abilities
 - d. low learning motivation
 - e. lack of awareness of the value of sociology
2. Faculty-related issues:
 - a. poor teacher quality, low competence, inadequate preparation (some are not majors in sociology)
 - b. low morale owing to low pay
 - c. predominant use of traditional "chalk talk" method of teaching
 - d. idiosyncratic behavior, prejudices, annoying habits, poor grooming
 - e. poor relations with students and colleagues

3. Resource Materials:
 - a. lack or inadequacy of updated, preferably indigenous, teaching materials
 - b. lack of audio-visual aids, particularly films or tapes
 - c. small and poorly ventilated classrooms
4. Administration-related issues:
 - a. lack of administrative support for innovative teachers
 - b. poor administrative supervision
 - c. poor administration-faculty relations
 - d. absence of a program to promote sociology as a profession or discipline

Resolutions

The resolutions arrived at by the convention participants were as follows:

1. Establishment of a summer institute for the training of sociology teachers and the development of teaching materials (syllabus, textbook, films, etc.);
2. Establishment of data bank to store and disseminate new and innovative instructional materials and teaching strategies;
3. Sponsorship of a roving lecture series featuring highly qualified and talented teachers/researchers of sociology;
4. Local (and even foreign) exchange of teachers to broaden the horizon of both teachers and students;
5. Fellowships or grants for teachers to pursue graduate studies in sociology;
6. Scholarships to attract intelligent students to specialize in sociology;
7. Seeking of administrative support for sociology course offerings and innovative teachers, pay increase for teachers, as well as the improvement of classrooms and library holdings in sociology;
8. Representation made to curriculum-making bodies to offer basic sociology as a required course and to limit class size to 35 students;
9. More frequent appearance of the *Philippine Sociological Review* (more often than quarterly) to include not only research

articles but essays on teaching innovations and community extension activities. Sociology teachers can use these as supplementary or reference materials.

Concluding Comment

On the whole, the conventioners left CPU happy and satisfied because they were able to renew acquaintances, make friends, sample

Ilongo hospitality, and most importantly, air their problems related to the teaching of sociology. They left Iloilo more aware of problems experienced by their colleagues, gained deeper insights on how to deal with these problems, and resolved to make good in their chosen profession. For us here in CPU who were touched by the intellectual discourse, patience and gaiety of the participants, we say: *Madamogid nga salamat.*