

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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Social transformation has long been a battlecry in Philippine society. Anyone seriously studying the complex interweaving of our societal problems would not miss their deep roots in structures of inequities. These inequities span the areas of agricultural landholdings, urban housing, employment patterns, domestic and foreign debt, the U.S. bases question, and political and ideological divisions within the country.

In our recent history as a nation, there were at least two glimmers of hope which seemed to have led us to blind alleys. The first occasion was the imposition of martial law which many seemed to have first welcomed in view of the tumultuous situation of the First Quarter Storm. People then appeared ready to give any "strong leadership" a chance to provide the push for social transformation, that is, until it became evident that the move was calculated to enrich only a small clique at the expense of the rest of the nation. A second opportunity was the EDSA experience which was again embraced if only as possible relief from the ill effects of the plunder and plunge of the nation's patrimony and economy. The expectations were high, possibly too high, that any objective gains of the early post-EDSA years have been lost in view. What has remained instead, are the unfulfilled dreams of a sweeping agrarian reform, an active negotiating and resolution of our burdensome debts, effective reliance on nongovernmental organizations and people's organizations in

political processes, and a resolute stance on the side of the people in facing the bases' questions.

Indeed the situation has become alarming that the Catholic church in the Philippines is recently committing herself to a bold role in politics judging from the documents and deliberations emerging from the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. Given the climate of political vacuum and stalemate, it appears the case that no single force has dominated the setting of direction or is providing leadership and vision to the nation. In the words of one serious commentator, Amando Doronila: "*In effect, [the Church] stole the initiative from other major political (including political parties) and social institutions in charting the national agenda for social and political transformations.*"

### Role of the Social Sciences in Transformation

Genuine concern and interest were not wanting, at least among the professional social science organizations belonging to the Philippine Social Science Council. Continuing participation of our organizations and their members, whether together or as individuals, have been constant in these past years.

The Philippine Sociological Society has traditionally sought to develop its *research* capabilities at the service of information, effective delivery systems, and monitoring and evaluation of private and government

agencies. In its last Convention the focus moved to the area of *teaching* with the hope of improving the pool of talent at consciousness-raising of the young and of our present crop of leaders. All the while too, there are efforts to be *socially involved in burning social issues by clarifying the parameters of discussion and estimating the realistic options which are available in the light of existing constraints.*

As was indicated earlier by Dr. Robert Salazar, Vice-President of the PSS and Chairman of the present Convention, we are inviting your participation in the issues of reform and development. Today is not our first move. Earlier, two regional Conventions were held in Bacolod City and in Naga City. The one was concerned with agrarian reform, peace efforts, and development, while the second focused on the role of values in development efforts. Other issues were put into the pipeline, but unfortunately unable to move forward with the constraints of finances and logistics of time, such as the burning ecological issues in relation to the goals of development: in the mining areas of Davao del Norte, the logging concessions of southern Bukidnon, and the marine resources of eastern Mindanao.

It is our hope that the papers and discussions of this Convention would lead to greater understanding of the issues of reform of development; in this way we might better delineate how PSS and other social science organizations could contribute their share in confronting these societal concerns.

### Present Context

The current crises surrounding our national situation and compounded by the worldwide impact of the Gulf war, first appeared to suggest the wisdom of postponing this Convention and any analytic interests in such crises. But our perception eventually indicated to us that the very reality of these crises provides us a welcome impetus to consider these issues, not an academic exercise, but as genuinely involved in the fate of our people. Undoubtedly, it is not our dream for the social sciences to resolve these complex issues. Our hope though is that these can have an important role through us in defining the terms of the debate and in specifying the viable options which are at hand.

The highlighting of the debate and of related options will not be put to waste in view of the forthcoming local and national elections of 1992. You and I agreed that raising our people's consciousness of these issues, bodes well for a politics of issues rather than the politics of personalities with which our nation has been plagued in these past years.

Let us therefore seek to understand where we are and how we got there, so that together we might better indicate where we go from here. A good day to one and all!