

**Opening Address delivered by Rafael Alunan III,
Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local
Government, on the occasion of Professor Ricardo M.
Zarco's retirement from the Department of Sociology,
University of the Philippines, July 1995**

It is indeed an honor to be here today in what, I understand, is normally an intimate gathering of scholars and academics.

I share with you the admiration and gratitude for Professor Ricardo M. Zarco's invaluable contribution to the field of sociology, and his life-long devotion to teaching and writing in this great university. Particularly of interest to the Department of Interior and Local Government or the DILG which I represent are Professor Zarco's studies on illegal narcotics, drug abuse, and juvenile delinquency. I think Dr. Cicero C. Campos, the President of the training arm of the PNP (the Philippine Public Safety College), who is a good friend of Professor Zarco's, can attest to that.

Lately, I have been the recipient of gracious invitations to speak before intimate and exclusive groups on the subject of crime. The most recent was a Senate Legislative Workshop in Batangas, where I served as a resource speaker for the "Wise Men" of the Republic.

It was, on the whole, a pleasant experience, except for a few minor points of contention with a senator or two who had some difficulty distinguishing workshop session from a legislative hearing.

Entering this university is, thus, like a welcome breeze. Here, the mind runs free from the expediency of politics and the demands of public life. Discourse is aimed towards truth, without fear or favor.

And, if I may add, I am happy to be in the company of friends and former colleagues who collaborated closely with someone whom I consider a great Filipino—Pepe Diokno.

I look forward to the panel's presentations and the exchange of ideas on one of the most, if not the most, crucial subject matter facing all of us: criminality.

On my part, I shall try to present to you some problems on criminality, within the criminal justice system (CJS) and as perceived by the Department, then perhaps we can find ways to address these problems together.

The criminal justice system is composed of five pillars: the police; prosecution; courts; corrections; and the community. Within the first four pillars, internal to the government, we have identified several major problems. These are:

1. Criminal infiltration/misfits in government service which have given rise to:

- graft and corruption within the CJS, manifested by connivance and coddling; and

- poor internal discipline not just among law enforcers, but among prosecutors, judges, etc., as manifested by widespread administrative negligence, poor work ethic, and conduct unbecoming public officers such as abuse of authority and discourtesy.

2. Poor coordination among the pillars of the CJS owing to several reasons, including the following:

- overlapping powers among disciplinary authorities (police, mayor, plebs);
- The National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) being stripped of its disciplinary power over the Philippine National Police (PNP);
- professional jealousy; and
- separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary, and too much independence among government agencies (turkism) which seriously impede coordination and cooperation.

3. Neglect/abuse of human resources that can be traced in part to:

- current police-population ratio standing at 1:750 whereas the law authorizes 1:500. At present, thus, a shortage of 38,000 policeman/women (authorized number: 135,000; actual: 97,000);
- poor pay: incomes below poverty line and lack of benefits which induce graft and corruption;
- culture of least resistance to graft and corruption and other illegal acts—*utang na loob* mentality, *makaawa* mentality; and
- political control/intimidation by traditional powers-that-be over the various pillars of the CJS.

4. Lack of equipage as readily seen in the PNP's

- inadequate firepower, mobility, and communications and the equipment; and
- lack of air and maritime assets to support overall police operations.

The government has been exerting efforts to address these problems. For example, making the peace and order councils work; getting the executive-legislative council to focus on critical

legislation; getting the executive-judicial council to address the defects in the administration of justice through internal management remedies or legislative intervention; and smoothening the coordination and cooperation among 30 odd law enforcement agencies.

On human resource development, there is a need to improve the capability of the PNP by:

- observing strict recruitment and selection standards;
- including skills, perspectives, and value formation development in their training;
- modernizing the PNP training staff, curricula, methodology, equipment, and facilities;
- increasing the number of personnel to meet the police-population ratio requirement of 1:500; and
- upgrading salaries and benefits of the police.

We realize, however, that no matter what we do, unless we approach the crime problem in its proper sociological context and in a holistic manner, all our efforts will not succeed. And this is one area where the DILG is, admittedly, weak.

For example, in recruitment, what kind of public servants are we looking for? What basic trait or psychological profiles would show good potential? Is their sociological background a crucial element for recruitment? A lot of studies have been made on the sociological background of soldiers in an effort to understand the praetorian impulses within the military. Why not the police in relation to the community? At the same time, if we acknowledge that it is society that provides the raw materials to government, why not examine society at large in relation to the government?

The quality of the education and training of the police, for example, is gradually being improved, but I doubt very much if, after leaving the classrooms, they fully comprehend and are adequately prepared to deal with the sociological aspects of crime. This is not an indictment of the department's training program but an acknowledgment that the problem is complex. A lot of research and study is needed to, among others, deal with society's apathy and less-than-ideal law-abiding culture which, in the words of President Fidel V. Ramos, needs overhauling. I can't speak for other departments, but I suspect that our difficulties are essentially common to all.

Unfortunately, as I am sure you can sympathize with this, the area of research and development is not given the priority it deserves in our society. For that matter, neither are repairs and maintenance, which explains the state of quality of our equipment and infrastructure. But that's another long story.

Let us now focus on the PNP, a major player within the criminal justice system.

With the scandals rocking the organization, the graft and corruption, and the prevailing though waning military mindset and factionalism within the PNP, an oft repeated criticism is that the PNP has lost touch with the community. Law enforcers must be brought closer to the community. But this is easier said than done.

There are attempts to do this through the "cops on the block" program, the women's desk at every station, and other approaches using the community policing concept.

Although there are some improvements in certain areas of the country, again, it must be said, these programs need to be supported by adequate data, information, and research.

The "cops on the block," for example, is virtually a transplant of the Koban concept in Japan. Just because it succeeds there doesn't mean it will succeed here. We must be able to develop a community-policing approach that is uniquely Filipino, one that is effective in our own societal and cultural context. That begins with a community with a proactive mentality because, in modern policing, crime prevention and control is everybody's business. It begins with self-discipline. Apathy and weakness in character only breed more difficulties all-around where only the lawless emerge as the victors.

Take the women's desk. This arrangement is supposed to provide some assurance and even comfort to female victims of sexual and physical violence. But victims of sexual abuse and violence are very special cases. Every police officer must know how to deal with such traumatized victims. The delineation between violence committed at home and outside the home and where the law enforcer steps in is still a societal issue that has to be resolved. Often, battered

wives are told by the police to just go back to their husbands under the assumption that such violence on women is normal in marriage.

There are many concerns on this nature that the department and society at large must face. In research and development, we think it would be most beneficial for everyone if the academe and government can work together to determine how society in the long-run can adopt a new outline and produce the proper thinking and behavior which can effectively deter and prevent crime.

Your studies and research on the nature and causes of crime will contribute immensely to our own efforts to combat crime.

In this regard, I am formally offering a partnership with you, the Department of Sociology of the University of the Philippines, to transform our society into the ideal safe haven for ourselves and, most especially, for our children.

Maraming salam at po.

