

NOTES AND COMMENTS

The seven articles in this issue constitute an interesting array of topics under the general heading of rural sociology. They do not by any means exhaust the field but they do give some idea of the subjects which must concern those interested in rural reconstruction. The first two articles concern factors which are frequently overlooked when planning rural reforms: the influence of social class differences and the persistence of primary group folkways hostile to rural innovation. The next article draws attention to the weakness of rural government and suggests changes to promote barrio autonomy. The last three in the series deal respectively with population pressure, enlightened landlordism and the role of rural high school. The series ends with an article on the social philosophy of agrarian reform.

Alvin Scaff spent the last year studying the Hukbalahap movement as a Fulbright research scholar. In this issue he writes of the problems created by class divisions within land settlement projects. This is a point of view which could be extended to other situations, since class divisions are a formidable obstacle to communication and cooperation in rural areas. One aspect which might be studied is the existence of class barriers between teachers and barrio dwellers. Allison Davis found that in the urban areas of the United States teachers, who are predominantly middle class, failed to understand the culture of lower class pupils. One would assume that the same condition may be present in the Philippine barrios. This would be a special problem when the teacher tries to become a community leader *via* the community school.

Jorge Masa's treatment of rural folkways indicates that the countryside needs something more than money and technical advice. Many changes which seem good to urban experts fail simply because they go against the basic beliefs and practices of rural society. Medical problems in the barrios, for instance, reflect the lack of medical facilities, but even more they indicate the tendency of the people to rely on the *herbolario* and *hilot*. Free government facilities are not always utilized, and poverty-stricken tenants will often ignore free medical care while paying out hard-earned money to those considered quacks by medical science. A recent study of Manila slums by Miss Teresita Jiminez, a U.P. graduate student, indicated that lower class urban residents also often ignore free clinics and pay fairly substantial sums to untrained healers. Similarly, the failure to follow improved agricultural practices may be more due to a clash with the folkways than to ignorance or better techniques.

To change rural society we must understand the basic culture of rural society and learn to deal with that culture with sympathy and understanding. Most of our rural experts have been alienated from rural society by the very process of education. The schools are usually an agency of urbanization and have not yet learned how to produce graduates who can understand and appreciate rural culture.

Robert McMillan is probably better acquainted with barrio life than any other sociologist in the Philippines. His treatise on the need for barrio self government reflects a feeling that effective instruction

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of democratic action have not yet been utilized in rural localities. It is a protest against the domination of the countryside by urban interests. By way of comparison it might be noted that "home rule" for local units is an issue in many nations. Devising a system which will favor local initiative and yet preserve the advantages of action over a large area is no easy task. One might also add that making government directly responsible to those concerned is one method of helping people to realize that government is simply the people planning together, rather than some mysterious abstraction with an abundant treasury. Too few people in the Philippines, and elsewhere, find it possible to really believe that they have a personal stake in effective government. Local initiative is difficult to develop unless people feel that the local government is an instrument which they can really use to solve local problems.

Population pressure is a topic of general interest which Amos Hawley handles with the precision of the professional student of demographic problems. The statement that Mindanao shows more population pressure than central Luzon is a direct denial of the usual belief. One wonders however if the situation in Mindanao does not reflect the fact that the exploitation of the island's resources has not proceeded as rapidly as the influx of people. In other words, may not Mindanao be able to carry a far larger number of people when the amount of capital invested there equals the amount put to work in central Luzon?

Another statement which challenges an axiom is the observation that farm tenancy is not necessarily a cause of rural poverty. This is based on the observation that the net income of tenants may be higher than the net income of farm owners, and that the most fertile areas often show a high tenancy rate. Two conclusions would seem to follow from this observation. First, the development of rural technology may do more to increase the tenant's income than he would gain from the simple abolition of tenancy. Second, discontent of any kind is perhaps more often associated with a population on a relatively high level whose aspirations are partially frustrated than with those living at a subsistence level where hopes have not been allowed to develop. Tenancy may not be a major cause of poverty and yet still be a source of discontent.

Cornelio Ferrer discusses the general case against tenancy and also points to reforms which may be accomplished within the framework of the system. The suggestions offered may not solve all rural problems, but they do indicate practical steps which may be taken by enlightened landlords who wish to make a social contribution.

Several observers, including Dean Panlasigui of the College of Education of the University of the Philippines, have pointed out that the schools tend to have an urbanizing influence. From this point of view the skepticism often found in rural areas toward formal education may be entirely justified, since school experience often tends to make students maladjusted to the rural environment. Richard Collier follows this theme in an analysis of the rural high school which he regards as the most important agency in determining whether youth have a rural or an urban orientation. His article suggests that we either frankly recognize and facilitate the urbanization process in the schools, or that we seek to reconstruct the rural high school so that it may be an agency which will strengthen rural culture.

All of the articles have a common theme, namely that people interested in rural change have been inclined to plunge ahead without gaining a basic understanding of rural culture. They have tended to accept urban values and attitudes as "advanced" and rural culture as "backward" without any careful study of the implications of this attitude. Rather than acting as social technicians strengthening the fabric of rural society, we too often have become simply proseleyters for an urban culture, whose complete acceptance might well mean death to the countryside. If we could summarize the social philosophy of rural sociology, it would be that in our efforts to help the individual we must remember the community of which he is a part. Further, when we look at the community we must remember the ancient culture which has shaped the actions and attitudes of members of the community. Finally, we must seek to discover the attitudes and techniques which actually build a stronger rural community rather than simply copying the folkways which have developed in urban settings.

Fidel Galang draws upon his experience as a worker in a Huk infested territory to point out the importance of ideologies. The Communist ideology is perhaps as important to their success as their exploitation of specific grievances. Non-Communists will have to offer an ideology which makes better sense to the barrio dwellers than the idea of the class struggle. Opinions may vary as to whether Personalism is an adequate answer to the Communist challenge, but this article has made a real contribution in emphasizing this aspect of the struggle. Man does not live by bread alone, and too often the Communists have been more aware of this than have their Christian opponents. Suffering may be endured when men believe that it is a part of a plan for a better life, and conversely, material benefits may have little effect unless they are interpreted as part of a movement which men think they understand. On a material basis Communism has usually meant hardship and famine while free enterprise has tended to raise the level of living. The economic weaknesses of democracy are less of a problem than the failure to kindle a faith in democracy which will inspire the masses of men.