

## THE PHILIPPINE SOCIAL SCIENCE COMMUNITY AND THE GOVERNMENT\*

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Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen:

I would like first to express my thanks for the privilege of being invited to address this Convention.

I would like next to note that the choice of topics for your working sessions reflects and apparently supports the government's national science policy. This policy as enunciated by the NSDB seeks to promote scientific research, not only to increase human knowledge, but also to apply science and technology to solve the many and diverse problems our nation is facing today.

This view of science runs counter to the once popular belief that science was a purely intellectual activity, carried out by people clad in white smocks in isolated academic centers. If this view of science ever corresponded to a social reality, it certainly has ceased to do so now. Science today is motivated by its social usefulness—and, of course, its impact on a developing society is tremendous.

Yet, there are many who think that the primary motivation of research in the social sciences is the desire to understand the many aspects of the behavior of man as an individual and as a social being.

At the same time, it is also recognized that there are numerous social problems demanding

immediate solutions—practical solutions which can only be formulated with some understanding of human behavior. Although it would be a rather odd kind of understanding that had no relevance to the solutions of social problems, there is a difference between broadening our understanding of human behavior on the one hand, and trying to solve a problem of society on the other. The social sciences are indeed distinct from the processes of problem-solving, but each can contribute to the other.

My remarks this morning will focus on the increasing tendency of the government to turn to social scientists for assistance in its efforts to solve the problems of a modernizing nation. This tendency may be traced largely to the government's recognition of the existing social and cultural variables that either hinder or hasten development projects and to the increasing orientation of government leaders towards comprehensive and rational planning.

There seems to be no need to preach to social scientists about the responsibility their profession has to examine issues of public policy—I believe that social scientists are professionally oriented toward this task. Rather, we have come to expect that the social science community will readily respond to such calls for assistance.

But there is the growing concern that as the social sciences in the Philippines continue to develop and progress, there will be an increasing emphasis on their technical problems, and as a corollary to this, a corresponding decrease of interest in problems of public policy. By technical problems, I mean those that are concerned

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with concepts, methodologies, and measurements.

I can recall that during the first decade after World War II, the rather small-sized Filipino social science community was grappling with issues directly related to nation-building. Many economists in governmental planning agencies and in private institutions were debating about national goals and the alternative strategies for economic development; the historians undertook research mainly on the period of the revolutions against Spain and the United States in an effort to find and establish a Filipino national identity in a period when Philippine nationalism was active and violent; the political scientists concentrated largely on the study of public administration—they wanted to contribute to the task of organizing an effective government and efficient civil service system; the sociologists and psychologists stressed the importance of social factors in the drawing up of plans for the nation's economic development, and some were involved in studies directly related to what was termed "social action"—social work, juvenile delinquency, and mental health. And the handful of anthropologists were concerned with showing that there was such a thing as a truly Filipino culture extant before the arrival of aliens on our shores.

Then, sometime in the mid-1950's and early 1960's there was an apparent shift in emphasis from an orientation toward what may be called public issues to an emphasis on technical problems and professionalism. I have argued elsewhere (1969) that this shift in emphasis may have been due largely to the behavioral research perspectives of returning Filipino Ph.D.'s from their studies in the U.S. and of American Ph.D.'s teaching and undertaking research in Philippine educational institutions.

This shift reflects itself in the given objectives of social science societies organized in the country in the past 20 years.

When the Philippine Sociological Society was organized in 1952, the stated objectives were these:

- to increase the knowledge of social behavior of the individual;
- to gather data on social problems and their possible solutions;
- to train teachers and research personnel in the field of social science; and
- to develop an increasing social understanding, awareness, and consciousness among the members.

Then, in 1962, when the Society was registered as a non-profit association with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the given purposes were:

- to promote human knowledge and welfare by encouraging study and discussion of matters in sociology, anthropology and related fields;
- to disseminate information research;
- to stimulate and assist the scientific study of human society; and
- to improve instruction in sociology, anthropology and related fields.

One may quibble and say that the first aim regarding the promotion of "human welfare" mirrors the concern over social problems, but I believe that there was a marked change in orientation.

The Philippine National Historical Society was set up in 1953, and among its purposes were the following:

- to promote nationalism and patriotism through studies and their diffusion;
- to contribute to the laudable efforts of Filipinos in working out their physical, intellectual and moral development;
- to help in the solution of various problems of the government and of the Filipino people; and
- to establish research centers to promote more militant civic consciousness and community action.

Contrast these purposes with those given by the *Philippine Historical Association* a few years later in its registration papers at the Securities Exchange Commission:

- to promote and propagate historical knowledge and studies;
- to collect and preserve historical relics and manuscripts; and
- to promote and conduct historical forums.

The other science societies also show this orientation. The Philippine Economic Society aims "to foster and encourage professional and social relations among economists in the Philippines and to seek to improve the standards of economic research in the Philippines." The Psychological Association of the Philippines was organized "to help promote the teaching, practice and profession of psychology as a science; to encourage research; to advance learning, teaching and research in psychology as a science; to promote human welfare; and, to advance its practice as an independent science-oriented and ethically conscious profession." And the Philippine Political Science Association was set up simply "to promote, encourage and support the objective and disinterested study of political science."

One can note the tendency towards making the various disciplines of the social sciences in the Philippines "more scientific" and "professional." And I believe that, although a number of these societies are apparently inactive, the efforts of the organizers are relatively successful. I may mention here some indicators of this success: the increase in the application of mathematical techniques in the analysis of data and the construction of theoretical models, and the burgeoning use of statistical surveys in research. These techniques demand greater precision with regard to the concepts, the definitions of variables, and the formulation of theorems and hypotheses. And the availability of computers in the country has also aided this move toward quantification, for the computer provides the means by which complex clusters of data may be analyzed and by which systems with many variables may be handled mathematically.

The question then is whether the increased emphasis on technical problems would result in a decrease in the interest of social scientists to

cope with practical issues of public policy. Although the concern with this problem seems to be warranted, I hold the opinion that the emphasis on technical problems is, in the final analysis, the only way to be of long-range help to policy makers. While some researchers devote their time entirely to theoretical concerns or to the acquisition and analysis of data concerning economic or social behavior—rather than to public policy issues—the results of their work provide a firmer base in theory and analysis, and interests in policy research can be more successfully pursued than before. For example, the success of economics as a policy science has been directly related to major conceptual, methodological, and analytical breakthroughs in the discipline of economics.

But no one would argue about the fact that today in the Philippines some social science researches are irrelevant to the social problems faced by the policy makers, and that many researches being undertaken are "non-additive."

However, there is the underlying assumption of the social science disciplines that patient intellectual pursuits will have a long-range, beneficial effect upon social policy.

The next issue I will discuss is the responsibility of the social scientist when he is requested by the government to assist in the solution of social problems and the formulation of public policy.

The social scientist should be free to pursue his professional interests, but I believe that he has a responsibility to examine issues of public policy at the request of responsible government officials. Although I would say that the social scientist has no more responsibility to discharge this function than any private citizen would have. But how he should respond when called upon to contribute his technical know-how depends on the nature of the problem, his own knowledge and experience with the issues involved, and the amount of time given him to deal with the problem.

Although he has an obligation to lend his special talents to enhance social welfare, he has

no obligation to justify or front for specific policy decisions. And neither has he an obligation to assume that issues identified by the government as priority public policy issues are really of the utmost priority. Similarly, he has no obligation to apply his professional abilities to problems when he is not given adequate time to examine such problems.

But government officials should expect assistance in program formulation, implementation and evaluation, only to the extent that they define the problems, provide adequate resources (especially time), understand the required research, and explore the implications with the social scientist.

With these conditions, the social scientist could cooperate and provide the following types of assistance.

For *Program Formulation*, he could:

- anticipate public policy problems before they become critical;
- identify the nature and implications of social, economic, political, psychological and cultural factors which will affect the results of a policy or program; and
- assess the social implications of feasible technologies in order to frame programs for an “invented future” as opposed to the acceptance of technologies and emerging social practices as inevitable.

For *Program Implementation*, he could:

- design implementation systems in consonance with the intent of the program and the wants, abilities and beliefs of the individuals involved; and
- improve the involvement and ability of the government’s field personnel.

For *Program Evaluation*, he could:

- develop, apply and analyze a set of national social development indicators; and
- conduct studies over a time series to see what changes can be attributed to a particular policy or program.

All these can be done by the social scientist if the government wants him to do so.

Let me mention here some remarks made by Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson during the 50th Anniversary of the Brookings Institute, a social research organization whose activities are oriented towards public policy issues. He was speaking of the three powers possessed by the social scientist. The first he identified as the intellectual power to create, to discover and propose new remedies for America’s social problems. The second is the intellectual power to administer complex programs in a rational way. The third power which he said was urgently needed, but which was supplied sparingly, because it was less glamorous than the power to create new ideas and less visible and less publicized than the power to administer new programs, was what he believed to be not a bit less critical to the success or failure of the government in the years to come. And this is the intellectual power to evaluate. He further said:

We need guidance and discriminate judgment. That judgment is exactly what those to whom God has given a good mind, and to whom circumstances have given a good education, are called upon to provide.

Their judgment may be wrong, and they must live with that knowledge as other men do who have been chosen by their fellow citizens to exercise the powers of government.

Their judgment may be right and still not be accepted in the political arena or the editorial room. This risk that they all take along with everyone else.

But they must provide it, it is an obligation of responsible intellect, no less than the obligation to produce fresh ideas or to serve the nation faithfully and diligently.

The last subject I would like to discuss today involves the areas for research which I believe need special attention and work. These are areas relevant to the work of the government in seeking to ameliorate our social problems—the contemporary and those expected in the near future.

How a problem is defined and conceptualized is important. An example I could cite was the Department of Labor’s research done on the *sacadas* of Negroes Occidental in 1969. From one view, the social problem involved was the plight of the *sacadas*: their economic, social and

health needs were not being met. From another view, the problem was the colonial mentality of the landlords who felt that without their haciendas, the *sacadas* would not be able to work at all and thus they should even be thankful for their jobs. And still another view would hold that the problem of the *sacadas* is not really one of priority as compared to that in the Central Luzon region.

Sociologists are well known for defining problems in many different ways and, therefore, coming up with different answers. (For instance, to what extent do we define problems at the symptom level, rather than at the level of more fundamental processes?) I believe that sociologists in general tend to see any social problem as being complex, rather than simple, and as being related to other complex problems. Thus, they feel that attempts to deal with particular ones are doomed to failure unless the general pattern is understood. And it is one thing to deal with a problem involving a few hundred people, and another if hundreds of thousands are affected and if millions of pesos are to be spent.

This implies that most sociologists probably believe that any solution to domestic problems will require a multitude of efforts over a long period of time, rather than being responsive to massive attempts aimed at the short run. After all, our contemporary problems are the results of many long-term historical processes, and it can hardly be expected that solutions can be provided, overnight, if ever there are.

The following are the subjects which government agencies would like the social science community to focus attention on:

1. Urbanization, metropolitan development, and relationships between city, suburban and rural areas, including implications of rapid population growth for housing, transportation and other facilities;
2. Causation and prevention of crime and delinquency, and treatment of offenders;
3. Economic growth and the problems of transition facing the underdeveloped regions of the country, including land re-

form and the redistribution of income;

4. Social and economic factors bearing on the use, development and the conservation of natural resources;
5. Expansion of educational research, including research methods for improving the organization, operations, and financing of educational institutions;
6. Adaptation of physical and social technologies, including analytical studies of how the socio-economic environments affect the adaptation of such technologies;
7. Conflict resolution and the reduction of tensions in the inter-personal, inter-group, and international spheres;
8. Growth, maintenance and functioning of organizations for social change and their own adaptability to changing circumstances and their malfunctioning and failure; and
9. Further study of family life and socialization of children to increase knowledge about adjustment of family members to each other and the development of personal value systems.

With this listing, allow me to end with a quotation from Alvin Gouldner. He was commenting on the proposal to make the Society for the Study of Social Problems more policy-oriented. He said he was fearful "that such an emphasis will serve to integrate (us) with the welfare state and to make (us)—in effect if not in intention—merely the market researchers of the welfare state."

But I trust that when the social science community in this country becomes more concerned with government policies for the amelioration of social problems, it will not be bound by the limits of governmental policy at the present nor even by the limited notion that government policy can solve all problems or that the liberal ways of getting change are the only appropriate perspective. Indeed, I believe that when the social scientists of this country respond to the call of the government for assistance, they will

do so with the integrity of their profession, unfettered by personal prejudices and popular myths. They will not fail the government.

Thank you again for letting me come and be with you.

REFERENCE

- Hermano, Ramon A.D.  
1969 The development of Philippine social science associations and the international science community. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco.