

## THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN THE CAMPAIGN FOR A MILITANT FILIPINISM

What is Filipinism? Filipinism is the love of the Filipino nation — its history, its culture, its traditions of freedom and democracy. As such, Filipinism is not the indiscriminate rejection of everything foreign. Rather, it is the judicious choice of those foreign elements that can enrich and vitalize the national culture and spirit.<sup>1</sup> For in this age in which we live, it is good thing to remind ourselves now and then that no man and no nation, as John Donne wrote many years ago, is an island entire of itself. In the second place, Filipinism is not the cheap and ostentatious display of national pride. I doubt if Jose Rizal ever wore a *barong Tagalog* to brave the cold European climate just so he could show to all the world his nationalism. In the third place, Filipinism is not the kind of love of country that made the Germans of Hitler embrace a suicidal cult of super race, but rather, it is the humble assertion of our individual personality as a nation.

In this spirit, what is the role of the home, the school, and the church in the campaign for a militant and dynamic nationalism?

The Constitution says that the cardinal aim of education should be the development of moral character, personal discipline, civic conscience, and vocational efficiency and the teaching of the duties of citizenship.<sup>2</sup> An acute observer of the Philippine scene once commented that "although the educational system of the Philippines is as close a copy as could be made of its American prototype, it resembles the totalitarian systems in the predominant emphasis which it places upon moulding the national character."<sup>3</sup> And the question arises: Does this mean that our Constitution sanctions the exercise, nay, the usurpation by the state of the traditional prerogative of the parents in the matter of the education of the child even at the sacrifice of the fundamental right of conscience and worship? This is important because the government may, in the name of nationalism, impose upon the children of society

<sup>1</sup> As Dr. Jose P. Laurel said, "this does not mean that we reject everything that is not Filipino, but it does mean that we should discard the false concept that everything foreign must be good and, therefore, must be imitated." *Veneration of Heroes in FORCES THAT MAKE A NATION GREAT* 27 (1943).

<sup>2</sup> Art. XIV, §5.

<sup>3</sup> HAYDEN, J. R., *THE PHILIPPINES: A STUDY IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT* 513 (1950).

In the 1949 edition of his work, Dean Vicente G. Sinco noted that "there is a striking similarity between this provision and that of the Constitution of the German Republic which says: 'All schools shall aim at inculcating moral character, civic conscience, personal and vocational efficiency imbued with the spirit of German nationality and international goodwill.'" *PHILIPPINE POLITICAL LAW* 388.

obligations that may well curtail the freedoms set up in the Bill of Rights. For instance, in developing "civic conscience" or in teaching the "duties of citizenship," is the state justified in compelling students to read certain books which their religion forbids them from reading?<sup>4</sup>

No, because the question cannot be resolved by simply asking that familiar Lincolnian dilemma: Must a government of necessity be too *strong* for the liberties of its people or too *weak* to maintain its own existence? It has been said, however, that a law of this kind does not violate the right of conscience of the individual because while it compels him to *read*, it does not compel him to *believe*, what is contained in the book.<sup>5</sup> A fine distinction such as this cannot belie the fact that as yet there is no other way by which the state can compel a citizen to abandon his views and believe in what the state would like him to believe. Does anyone believe, for instance, that the state can tell the people: All of you should believe whatever is expressed in this book? Indeed, to many a young mind what is prescribed as reading matter is good.<sup>6</sup> But even granting

<sup>4</sup> The original version of Senate Bill No. 438, as introduced by the Committee on Education, required the compulsory reading of the original and unexpurgated editions of Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* which the Catholic hierarchy of the Philippines considered subversive of the faith of young students. As finally passed and signed into law on June 12, 1956, Republic Act No. 1425 provides in Section 1:

"Courses on the life, works and writings of Jose Rizal, particularly his novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, shall be included in the curricula of all schools, colleges and universities, public and private: *Provided*, That in the collegiate courses, the original or unexpurgated editions of the *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* or their English translation shall be used as basic texts.

"... The Board (of National Education) shall promulgate rules and regulations providing for exemption of students for reasons of religious belief stated in a sworn written statement, from the requirement of the provision contained in the second part of the first paragraph of this section; but not from taking the course provided for in the first part of said paragraph...."

The Board of National Education recently implemented this Section by providing that the sworn statement may be executed by the student if of legal age, or by his parent or guardian if underage.

"The said said sworn statement shall include:

"a) the full name, residence and civil status of the student; and of the person executing the statement if other than the student;

"b) the religious sect, denomination or church of which the student is a member;

"c) a declaration that said student is not allowed, for reasons of religious belief, to read the unexpurgated edition or translation of the *Noli Me Tangere* and the *El Filibusterismo*."

This exemption may be revoked by the student, his parents or his guardian by so declaring in writing at any time during the school year. See Rules and Regulations to Implement Republic Act No. 1425, 52 O.G. No. 9, 4227-29 (1956).

<sup>5</sup> Editorial, 21 LAWYERS JOURNAL 157 (1956).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. As Justice Douglas said in *Gelling v. Texas*, 343 U.S. 960, at 961, 72 Sup. Ct. 1002 (1952) (concurring opinion): "If a Board of Censors (here the state) can tell the American (Filipino) people what it is in their best interest to read...then thought is regimented, authority substituted for liberty...."

that such a law does not force one to believe what is contained therein, still there is this objection to it: who wants to read a book which assails the very basis one's faith? The proponents of this kind of law will say: Well, if it's not true that the doctrines of your church are that bad, here's your opportunity to set the record straight. Our answer is this:

" . . . Many may believe what they cannot prove. They may not be put to the proof of their religious doctrines or beliefs. Religious experiences which are as real as life to some may be incomprehensible to others. Yet the fact that they may be beyond the ken of mortals does not mean they can be made suspects before the law."<sup>7</sup>

In taking this position, may I say that I do so as a Filipino, as one who values civil liberties, and certainly not as a "disciplined . . . indoctrinated Catholic"?

"To believe," Justice Robert Jackson once said, "that patriotism will not flourish if patriotic ceremonies are voluntary and spontaneous, instead of compulsory, is to make an unflattering estimate of the appeal of our institutions to free minds," for "if there is any fixed star in our Constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein."<sup>8</sup>

In truth, our Constitution also tells us that while the state exercises supervision and regulation over the schools, not the state but the parent, has the natural right and duty of educating the youth for civic efficiency.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, "any public schools which the state sets up in addition, . . . are to supplement the home, not to supplant it. They are not schools to which the parents *must* send their child, but only places where they *may* send him to discharge the responsibility to educate him which every parent bears in a pluralistic society."<sup>10</sup> And it was in recognition of this principle which lies at the bedrock of democratic educational systems that the Supreme Court of the United States said that the child is not

<sup>7</sup> *United States v. Ballard*, 322 U.S. 78, 64 Sup. Ct. 882 (1944).

<sup>8</sup> *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 63 Sup. Ct. 1178 (1943).

<sup>9</sup> Art. II, §4.

<sup>10</sup> BRUBACHER, J. S., *MODERN PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION* 157 (1950).

In a speech before the World Confederation of Organizations of Teaching Profession, Secretary of Education Gregorio Hernandez, Jr. declared that "under the educational philosophy . . . of our Constitution, the state is not the educator, much less the only educator of the child. *Manila Daily Bulletin*, August 10, 1956, p. 9, col. 1; *The Philippines Herald Weekly News Review*, August 25, 1956, p. 3, at p. 6, col. 1. See also *The Natural Right and Duty of Parents to Educate the Child for Civic Efficiency*, 21 *LAWYERS JOURNAL* 53 (1956).

the creature of the state, that those who nurture him and direct his destiny have a right coupled with a high duty to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.<sup>11</sup> Reflecting the educational philosophy of our Constitution, the new Civil Code ordains that every child shall be given moral and civic training by the parents or guardian.<sup>12</sup> It further provides that it is the duty of the parents and those exercising substitute parental authority, among whom is the teacher, "by precept and example, (to) imbue the child with highmindedness, love of country, veneration for the national heroes, fidelity to democracy as a way of life . . ."<sup>13</sup> This then is the feature of our educational system which distinguishes it from its totalitarian counterparts. This also is the definition of the roles of educational agencies in the campaign for nationalism.

In calling your attention to these provisions, I do not intend to minimize the value of flag ceremonies, or the observance of national heroes days, or the hanging of the pictures of Rizal, Bonifacio, Abad Santos or Quezon in the classrooms or the teaching of a national language as means of fostering national consciousness among our people. I wish merely to point out the dangers and pitfalls of an educational system which takes away from the parents the control of the education of the child especially in matters within their competence.

How well do parents realize this? How well do they realize that the child spends the greater part of the day in the home? How well do they realize that formal school education is not adequate—that theirs is still the primary responsibility in this continuing partnership for the development of the spiritual, the moral, and the intellectual character of the child?

I daresay that unless they do before it is too late, a great disenchantment is in store for them, for sooner or later, they will find out that their children are sadly wanting in refinement of character. When one reflects on the acts of vandalism being committed by truant and delinquent children of the so-called good families, one wonders whether after all the parents have not been recreant to their duties under the Constitution and the laws. When one reads of the dismal failure of probes because the citizenry dare not testify against crookedness in the councils of the government, one wonders whether there was not an over reliance by parents on the schools to teach their children the duties of a citizen in a democracy. Teodora Alonzo knew all too well her responsibility

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<sup>11</sup> *Pierce v. Society of the Sisters of the Holy Name*, 268 U.S. 510, 45 Sup. Ct. 571, 573 (1925).

<sup>12</sup> Art. 356, par. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Art. 358.

when she did not let the young Rizal go to bed until he had read his lessons. So also was the mother of Mabini that the latter, in loving remembrance of his mother, could pay her a splendid tribute thus: "Dearest Mother, In the midst of my misfortune, your memory is not painful to me because I am comforted by the thought that Fate has spared you the sorrow of witnessing them. But, should good fortune come to me unexpectedly, perhaps I would complain against Fate for not having allowed you to enjoy it with me."<sup>14</sup>

Together, the home, the school, and the church must carry on the campaign for a healthy nationalism within the framework of our Constitution and laws. Together, they must lead the movement to retrace, as it were, our footprints on the sands of time—there to the ancient fountain of old and forgotten virtues that once were the precious possessions of our forefathers. Together, the home, the school, and the church must work for the common end under the aegis of an enlightened and dynamic nationalism so that a sustaining Providence shall continue to secure for our people the blessings of independence under a regime of justice, liberty, and democracy!

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in LAUREL, *Love and Respect for Parents*, *op. cit. supra* note 1 at 25.