

NATION-BUILDING: THE CONTINUING CHALLENGE

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I CAME TO Silliman University, to see but not "to conquer."* I say this because a politician, especially one belonging to the party of the majority, is always suspect, whatever he does or wherever he goes. That is the price we pay for existing in the focus of public attention.

However, I assure you that in this particular instance of my visit to my Alma Mater, I have no motives other than the purely personal wish to revisit the scenes of my younger days and to renew acquaintances with old friends and with your vigorous, invigorating and far-seeing president.

There have been great changes on the Silliman campus since I was here in 1922-1924; and that is the way things should be. Even our own country has changed, from a basically agricultural country to one that is rapidly being industrialized, from a carabao-and-plow economy to a technological economy as we use more and more "know-how" and machines to develop our rich natural resources.

In just six decades, the nation has undergone changes, both internal and external, that we can be proud of. Our people are more literate, better clothed, healthier, more articulate, better educated than the Filipinos of the Spanish era. While we all wish we had progressed more extensively and more rapidly, and we wish we were more united in the effort to build up this nation, we know that we have done much and that we can do more.

We can do more if all our people are educated; we can do much more if our people are *better* educated—educated for dedicated leadership and to assume unhesitatingly the burdens of civic and personal responsibilities.

The educated man is a productive man: he is a creator and a

*Allusion to newspaper reports of his visits to the provinces purportedly to win over to the Liberal Party members of the opposition Nacionalista Party.

craftsman; he is above pettiness and beyond corruption. He believes in God and delights in the finer things in life. He shirks no necessary duty and moreover welcomes challenges. Where do we find this kind of man, this educated Filipino? How soon can we produce a race of truly educated Filipinos?

I would like to say that we can find the educated man on the campus of our universities. But I cannot honestly say this, and you know why. Many of our institutions of higher learning have fallen on their job of producing the truly educated man, the exemplary man, the leader. Instead they have produced imitators and docile followers. They have not produced the thinking man, they have not produced the doers of good, the useful producers of society: the inventive man, the creative man. They have not produced the solvent society.

Much may be expected of our universities, and much should be expected of universities that set the pace for other universities. I am proud to say that my Alma Mater has been a pace-setter among our institutions of higher learning, and I am not being partisan when I say this, nor am I being polite. Here on this campus, in spite of many problems and difficulties, a decisive effort is being made to raise the standards and improve the general quality of Philippine higher education. You have assiduously reviewed your programs and offerings to keep up with the most modern trends in education in more advanced countries, and you have revised them to meet the growing needs of a changing society.

You have amplified your curriculums to develop leaders for this nation in many fields. I believe that this is of the greatest importance to a developing nation like ours, for on the quality of leadership as well as on the quality of citizenship we produce will depend the future of this country. Silliman must produce leaders in economics, in business, in law and nursing, in technology, in creative writing and journalism, in music, in public administration, in the churches, and even leaders on the athletic fields. Silliman must be the source and breeding center for young and vigorous and dedicated leaders of all kinds; it must be open at all times to the elite of the intellect, no matter of what race or creed or politics, or economic stature. For only when a university is dedicated to education without bias or hypocrisy is it truly and validly an institution of learning.

You have also, here in Silliman, opened wide your gates to poor but talented young people, young men and young women, who be-

cause of the accident of birth or the incidence of poverty, run the serious risk of being delegated to eternal anonymity and general uselessness. Thanks to your efforts to raise scholarship funds last summer, I understand you were able to give scholarship to 220 students worth ₱21,030.96, grants-in-aid to 222 students worth ₱15,491.20. In addition, this University has given work opportunities to 340 students valued at ₱51,422.59 from its own funds.

This effort on behalf of the poor but deserving is a distinctive mark of Silliman, an institution founded on the generosity of the original benefactor of this institution, Dr. Horace B. Silliman, and built up by the faith of its past presidents and hundreds of loyal and devoted Americans and Filipinos on the faculty and staff. It speaks well of the Silliman tradition and its commitment to the basic concept of democracy, the belief that "there are extraordinary possibilities in the ordinary man."

It is on this concept of the great possibilities and the ultimate wisdom of the common man, earned through long generations of struggle for survival and every conceivable difficulty, that great democracies are built, requiring the utmost dedication and discretion in national leadership. And it is in this area as well as in the development of an intelligent, sentient common denominator of the democratic formula that Silliman University can make a great contribution. We need a citizenry that is alive to public issues and problems, capable of expressing, and of making felt, their will on these issues and problems. We need a people possessed of the highest concern for the welfare of this nation, whether on the local or barrio level or on the national or policy-making level. And above all we need a people alive to the needs of nation-building and capable of contributing to fill these needs.

But our people cannot make any appreciable contributions to the major task of building our nation unless our educational institutions help change their attitude towards work, towards their civic and personal responsibilities, towards their community and towards the country. We are one people living in one country, but at times we think and behave as though we are a hundred separate, distinct, even antagonistic, tribes or factions with nothing in common except the color of our skins.

I am happy to note that in this vital area, this University is making great progress. It has, through its Extension Service Program, made contributions to the improvement of barrio life, and through its work scholarships it has impressed its students with the

value of work as a means to acquiring experience as well as a living. Significant changes in our society are not brought about by preaching or lecturing or writing about them, although all these are valuable as eye-openers, but by slow, painstaking demonstration and practice of what we preach or teach or write about. I would like to see every major school in the country do what this University is doing—has been, in fact, doing for many years.

The Government, despite what you read in some newspapers and what you hear from some speakers, is deeply and sincerely interested and committed to a program of national advancement, of developing and utilizing to the fullest the vast resources of our country and people. I have the greatest faith in our potentialities and capabilities as a people and in President Macapagal's program of nation-building. But no program, however good, however desirable, however necessary, will achieve its goals unless—and this is an important consideration—the people, the Filipino people, have faith in it, want to see it succeed because it is for the common good, and have the will to make it achieve its purpose.

The tradition of partisanship that has made us one people in times of emergency and war, must be made manifest, not in the interest of political ambitions, but in the interest of the common, national goal—the building of a strong, progressive Filipino nation. Is there a higher or a better goal than this—for our Government, for our people, or for our schools?

We shall depend on our schools and universities to help us build this nation, to give us this kind of Filipino citizenry and leadership. You have done well; you must do more. You must, in your own favorite words here at Silliman, "educate for excellence." You must so educate and inspire the Filipino student with a love and respect and admiration for everything done well, whatever it is, however small or seemingly trivial it is, as long as it is done well. This deep respect for quality, whether in goods or services, is I think one of the most valuable virtues you can inculcate in our people. Unless we have this desire and unless we insist and demand quality, we cannot produce quality goods, we cannot expect quality service, we cannot build a quality nation.

For my part, I pledge to do all I can to help you achieve your goals—personally as an alumnus of this University, as a public official dedicated to our national welfare, and lastly and proudly, as a Filipino.