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## Comments

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# philippine studies

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## Comments

Juan Flavier and Arturo Tanco

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organizational structures to youth participation rests on the assumption that both, by working together, can consolidate energy and experience in the development of the rural sector.

Although the limitation of the youth participation is recognized still their participation should not be limited to minor roles in the overall process. It is in the spirit of this recommendation that youth representation should be encouraged and recognized from policy formation to direct implementation. The Tokyo Conference showed that issues raised by the youth, even if it were a bit late, can be heard and acted upon.

## COMMENTS

### DR. JUAN FLAVIER

I have very few comments to make. First, I am intrigued by the great possibilities of the parishes as take-off points for rural and agricultural development. How this may be done is still vague in my mind. It can only be done, however, if more people in the parishes can be trained for this purpose, if more technical expertise can be harnessed to help them. We need all the expertise we can get if we are to avoid the needless bungling characteristic of some efforts at rural and agricultural development. Secretary Tanco, I am sure, will agree with me when I say that the work in this area is a science. I know one person, for example, who in the goodness of his heart involved himself in agricultural development. He was a commerce graduate. One day he tried to give a farmer some advice. He said: "Mang Ambo, alam n'yo, yang inyong *repolyo* para magkaroon ng ulo, lagyan ninyo ng bao ng n'yog." I was very much impressed, because of the practicality of the suggestion. Unfortunately, the farmer was not reacting; so he repeated his suggestion. "Mang Ambo, yang inyong *repolyo*, para magkaroon ng ulo, lagyan n'yo ng bao ng n'yog." The farmer then looked up and said: "Opo, salamat po, sa minsan ho gagawin ko, *petsay* ho ito e." So, you know, sometimes in our desire to help our people in terms of rural and agricultural development, we might be hitting at the wrong things.

Second, I am in very great agreement on what has been said here. Everytime I hear the recommendations, however, what pops up in my mind is the question of "how" these can be done. Generally my own strategy would be in terms of the parish—maybe start small. In doing so, our main problem, perhaps, is breaking that vicious cycle of needs: to have capital to start people off in the villages we talk about setting

up credit unions; but to have credit unions there have to be surplus or savings which in turn presuppose having more than one needs; now it may be said that in order to have surplus and savings, there must be production, but, of course, production needs capital—and so the cycle goes. We in the PRRM and the IIRR have been trying something with which to break this cycle. We are using the force of the organization as leverage: we have succeeded in getting some banks to lend money to the farmers on the guaranteed funds system, using our force more than our money. Thus capital requirements are filled, but always on the condition that the farmers would follow certain necessary scientific methods to increase production, e.g., using new varieties, fertilizers, insecticides, etc. Can the Churches do something like this? Another point that intrigues me is the thought that perhaps we are fighting systems. For example, when we tried to work on the concept of buying clubs, we discovered that we were grappling not with the issue alone of buying clubs as vehicles for inputs and marketings but also with the system of distribution controlled by the fertilizer factories. Maybe, therefore, it is not just the individual with which we have to cope but with intricate systems. In order to correct a system it seems that we have to replace it with another system—a workable one. This makes things a little more complicated, and because it is complicated I shall stop here.

#### SECRETARY ARTURO TANCO

I'm intrigued, too, both by the paper and the comments of Dr. Flavier. I think we should look at the paper in the context of the "how" that Dr. Flavier has raised. And having been 6 months in the government now, I'm an expert on this.

But it seems to me that, tying up the paper and Dr. Flavier's comments, 3 critical areas in this system, should at this point be focused on. The first one has been pointed out: the critical importance of converting tenants into landowners. This is, I might point out, only one aspect of land reform. The second is the other aspect, and affects far more people than the tenancy question; it has to do with the question of land distribution. It's not played up too much except in the headlines and that, as we all know, is a fruitless exercise. But it is certainly a key element in social justice programs as well as in any productivity program. And that, in fact, is the third. It is not sufficient simply to convert the tenant into a landowner or to give land to the landless, it's not sufficient to do this if in doing so you simply convert him from one form of starvation to another. Therefore the third critical input is the question of capitalizing on the breakthrough in the farmer's mind occasioned by the Rice Revolution and trying to push that breakthrough into new frontiers.

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Let me take each of these very briefly. The question of conversion of tenants into farmers. I see very little that the Church is in fact doing in this area: perhaps indirectly by assisting the FFF, but not directly certainly. I too am intrigued by the explosive potential of the parishes and Church leaders throughout the country participating in just such a movement. One of the basic problems in both tenancy as well as in all these land problems, is the sheer factor of ignorance: the fact that a tenant or, alternatively, a settler who does not yet own his land does not know the procedures. The simple procedure of tilling his land, the fact that he does not know what his rights are—these too are very effective barriers to any land reform, yet we simply do not have enough people in the government able or willing to undertake a massive educational effort. This is why I have been in discussion with Fr. Victoriano on some kind of a joint effort in this regard, trying to enlist lay leaders throughout to actually go out and get tenants and settlers, to sit them down and tell them what their rights are, going to the point of bringing them to the proper agencies, helping them file their applications for land patents and so forth. This, it seems to me, would be one of the most constructive avenues for social action by the Church.

A second effort would pertain to the training of Church leaders in productivity, or some special area, so that their dedication may be combined with some competence. Both the government and the Church should perhaps avoid getting so excited as to run amok and try to adopt a mass of thousands of projects instead of concentrating their resources on a few. To my mind, the most fruitful area for assisting in the third effort, the effort toward productivity, would be to concentrate in areas where the Rice Revolution has hit, because here the farmer has been changed. When he accepted the words of a farm technician of mine, adopted a high-yielding variety, followed the suggestion to use fertilizer, and then found out that he tripled his crop, he is a changed man. This, to my mind, is the most fruitful area for expansion. If we can get a concentration of Church leaders, PRRM, people from the government, to try and widen that breakthrough, to try and move him, not only into rice but into feed, to diversify his crop, into livestock to supplement his income, into fisheries in some cases, in some areas of the country, then we are in effect capitalizing on a newly-discovered, innovative, experimental attitude on the part of the farmer.

Finally, a word about some of the other points raised in the paper. Toward these ends, I would subscribe fully to the formation of autonomous peasant organizations, not perhaps directly by the Church but pushed along the most active organization in the field now, the FFF, and assist in their efforts. It is true, a voice is thereby given to unorganized groups, and pressure is therefore put on the establishment, as it were, to respond in swifter terms. In fact, it helps some members of the establishment move their establishment along when pressure is ap-

plied because frequently you have a great many government officials who are well-meaning, who are dedicated, who are competent, but who just do not have the leverage to bring a balance of power against those who are not so dedicated and those who are more politically-minded within the government. I subscribe fully to this need for widening the base of power, of *organizing the unorganized*. Hitherto we've had a lot more organization in the urban areas among industrial unions. I know, I was with the FFF and FFW before and we were much more organized than the FFF in the decade of the '50's. Well, now in the decade of the '60's, we're getting some response to initial efforts which, I must admit, were very unsuccessful in the decade of the '50's.

The problem has already been raised in this paper of how precisely the activism, the enthusiasm of youth fits into the structures. The students, apparently, make a very good striking force. They're very active, they're very dedicated, but experience and judgment are still not there, and when they start going into the role not simply of articulating grievances but of trying to present solutions, it often happens that these solutions are not only half-baked or completely raw, but also incapable of achieving the ends sought. Responsible leadership—however that's defined—is crucial in balancing off and utilizing different elements of groups of students and of farmers, in combining these elements into a very constructive force, a real pressure group. Or else there might be imbalances. Let me take a concrete example. In some cases, a just cause and a good solution is resisted by some of the powers-that-be not because of the substance but because of the form in which it's presented. I myself, in fact only yesterday, or day before yesterday, almost didn't get what Mr. Mondejar wanted because of certain virulent statements advocated by student leaders who were not even with the group, and this can get to be—in this kind of a society of ours—this can get to be counter-productive because people will in fact, look at form and style sometimes, more than at substance. I think these are the only comments I'd like to make on the paper. It treats the subject well except where it comments on rural underemployment and the reduction of rural employment due to the Green Revolution. This has not been my experience here in the Philippines. The Green Revolution has, in fact, increased rural employment considerably and continues to do so, perhaps up to a certain point. At that point, if mechanization is required to continue the movement further, then rural underemployment may result. But, in my experience, we have increased the number of working months of a farmer precisely because of the non-seasonal varieties, precisely because of the increase in irrigated areas that have to accompany a Green Revolution. But other than this minor error, I believe that the direction of the paper is a very sound one.