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Community Schools

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This useful information included, in the volume which we have seen, a series of articles on agriculture. Nearly every issue had a long discussion (in Spanish and Tagalog) of some agricultural subject. Three articles discussed the cultivation of the peanut; five the cultivation of cotton; two were about indigo; and finally two were about tobacco.

In our era of emphasis on the farmer and on the need to help him in his problems, the information that a Catholic weekly of Manila almost seventy years ago was talking to the farmer in his own language is very interesting.

Community Schools

Mount Carmel Parish
Talisayan, Misamis Oriental
Sept. 26, 1955

Dear Father Editor:

In his excellent book review (PHILIPPINE STUDIES, Sept. 1955), Father Frederick Fox expresses a concept of the so-called "community school" which, I think, qualifies him for a further study of this question, and I would like to suggest that you ask him to undertake such a study for PHILIPPINE STUDIES. Such a study undertaken by one of Father Fox's ability and training would, I think, prove enlightening to educators like himself who think of schools only in terms of that kind of school which aims at the development of the individual, and would greatly benefit a much neglected sphere of Catholic education.

Actually, the Catholic Church is operating two kinds of schools. One kind, the kind which educators commonly think of as schools, aims at the development of the individual. The other kind aims at the development of a specific community. These two kinds of school are not in opposition to one another but are complementary to one another and Father Fox rightly repudiates the idea of having one supplant the other. Both are necessary, neither can be considered superior to the other; they are merely different. And the Catholic "community school" of which I speak is not the same as the public school system's "community school" which Father

Fox justly condemns for confining itself to the mere economic development of the community. The Catholic "community school" has the more adequate aim of developing the religious and intellectual as well as economic life of the community.

These Catholic "community schools" are our rural parish high schools. They are, or should be, "community schools" because they are an activity of the parish church, an instrument used by the parish priest in his efforts to fulfill his educational responsibilities as parish priest. The "individual development" type of school does not, nor should it, undertake the development of the community in which the school is located. As Father Fox well says, the mental, physical and moral development of each individual within its walls is enough to keep that kind of school occupied. But the parish priest is given responsibility for a specific territory, a parish and all the people in it—that is, a community. And the instruments he uses in fulfilling that responsibility, including his parish high school, are aimed at fulfilling this community responsibility for the religious, intellectual, and even economic development of that specific community.

One might object that such an aim excludes such institutions from the definition of what is called a "school." Then do not call them schools. But whatever one wishes to call them, such institutions exist, they are educational in nature, they are an important part of Catholic education, and some sympathetic attention given by educators to these institutions would greatly assist parish priests, who are usually not educators.

These Catholic "community schools" perform, or should perform, a necessary function which complements the function of those institutions which our educators commonly call schools. In order to develop individuals, there must be individuals to be developed. And since the individuals are largely a product of the community environment from which they spring, the quality of the individual whom the "individual development" type of school undertakes to develop will largely depend on the quality of the community from which that individual comes. And the religious, intellectual, even economic development of that community is one of the responsibilities of the parish priest, a responsibility which he seeks to fulfill by various means, including his parish high school.

Generally speaking, these parish high schools are not very efficiently fulfilling this objective. And the reason is that they

are being operated as if their objective was the development of the individual, not the community. And the reason why they are being so operated is that they are being operated by parish priests, who, not being professionally trained educators, blindly follow the lead of the professional educators who invariably speak only of schools whose aim is to develop the individual.

Some attention by professional educators given to these parish "community" educational institutions would greatly benefit not only these "community" institutions but also the "individual development" schools, and Catholic education in general, as well. I vote for Father Fox to lead the way.

Respectfully yours,

JOSEPH I. STOFFEL, S. J.
Parish Priest