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Comments

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Richard Dickinson, "Church-sponsored Development Efforts" in the *International Review of Missions*, Vol. xiii, no. 232.

Richard Shaull, *Revolutionary Change in Theological Perspective*, in *The Church Amid Revolution*, ed. Harvey Cox, NY, Associated Press, 1967 (pp. 27-47); 36 pp.

The Development Challenge and the Churches in Eastern Asia, *Extracts of Background Statements and Provisional Outlines of the exploratory sessions of the EACC, Committee on Development, Chinese YMCA, Kowloon, Hongkong, 1969.*

Philip Land, *Populorum Progressio, Mission and Development*, SODEPAX, Vatican City.

COMMENTS

MR. MANUEL MONDEJAR

We are here talking about development, talking about means and ways, of how to have people progress, how to have people liberated from the exploitation of others, but we do so without asking the exploited—the worker, the peasant—their opinion. We are dictating the terms for them; we are committing again that same mistake i.e., committing the mistake for others, not recognizing others' right to commit their own mistakes. I think that this is one of the main arguments that we have against all structures presently existing in the Philippines. Consider for example the government. It is supposed to be a democratic government. But what is the basis of democracy? In the very constitution itself it says that you cannot vote if you do not know how to read and write. In what language? In a colonial language, namely English. I was just wondering why, for example, some of our cultural minorities who preserve their own means of writing, are not allowed to vote in their own script. These are the real Filipino people, if we may say so. Yet they are not allowed to use their script to vote. Is this democracy? If democracy is supposed to be the rule of the majority, I was just wondering how many voters there are. 8,000,000? Do 8,000,000 voters represent the Filipino population? If as they say 70% of the Filipino population are youth, how is it that we seldom see youthful people in our government?

Now, consider education. What are we taught in school? We are taught Western values that never existed in the Philippines. One of the classical examples we always meet is the fact that in Grade One or in kindergarten we are taught that A is for Apples. Apples

are not grown in the Philippines. We are taught about Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. We don't have snow here. Even in this conference I was wondering why the Church, especially the hierarchy, has always been attacked, has always been criticized. Isn't it that the Church of the second Vatican Council is supposed to represent the whole people, the participation of the people? We cannot wait for people to do these things for us. Not any more. I think we are adults, old enough to commit our own mistakes and plug for ourselves.

We were wondering at one time why a concrete case of injustice which had been publicized had not elicited reactions from Church leaders, from so-called great or distinguished laymen. As one companion of mine said, "you know the Churchmen are supposed to be bridges." But they are always bridges that seem to be always hanging. They don't start from any side. In a conflict between the rich and the poor, they don't take sides. But a bridge has to start from one side. It cannot remain in-between. It has to start either from the side of the rich or on the side of the poor. But it has to start from one side. Take the case in which a family was trying to protect its rights, and people who were trying to protect that family were lodged in jail together with the family simply because they did not agree with the judgment of the judge that loggers should pass through the property of the poor farmer without paying him damages. People just kept quiet. I believe the Church laymen and Catholics knew about it, but they remained silent, with the silence of the cemetery. No noise, when in fact we should take sides as Christians.

In the whole process of liberation, people cannot and will not be able to crystallize their opinions without an organization. Individuals will just be like St. John the Baptist, crying in the wilderness and having heads cut off. But in an organization, as a massive force in which opinions and concepts are crystallized, they become a powerful force. I think this is one of the biggest challenges that face the Church as well as the layman, the challenge to organize, not only that men's rights may be safeguarded but more especially so that opinions may be crystallized and articulated.

In the present political situation of the Philippines, for example, we are supposed to have democracy, yet many people don't believe in it. Why? Because we vote as individual voters. People vote because they are paid. But if there is an organization in which they may exchange their opinions, in which they may share their thoughts, in which they may discuss their interests, they may be able to vote more freely. They will know the value of their vote. We believe that this election (for the CC) will again be a mockery of the whole democratic process if the people are not organized. Our citizens will be voting for those people who are supposed to be educated, those

with degrees, and who will make a constitution for the people, but not a constitution of the people. Look at our constitution at present. There are some good points in it, but are they implemented? Why are they not implemented? We have for example, the "Operation Search Warrant" where basically the warrant of arrest or search warrant is guaranteed by our Bill of Rights. Why is it necessary to institute this operation? The only way to change structures that are oppressive and exploitative is by the massive participation of the people. That is why even Vatican II in *Gaudium et Spes*, even the Popes in the social encyclicals, in the Message on the Church in the Modern World, emphasize and insist on social organization. In the present context, in the present era of history, that is the only viable way man may truly be recognized as a human being. In other words, it is only through a balance of forces, balance of power, that man, fallen that he is, will recognize the dignity of his fellowman.

In former times, tenants of rich families, usually when harvest time came, brought the share of the harvest to the house of the landlords, and there in the house of the landlords, they were made to do some work, fetching water, cleaning the house, etc. Now, after the farmer has been made to recognize his right, that he is as much a human being as his landlord, each entitled to his own right, and when this farmer says, "I will not bring anymore the share of the harvest to your house but you have to come to the farm and take your share of the harvest since anyhow you are just staying in the house all the time, while I work in the fields, it's about time that you also take a walk to the field and get your share of the harvest," Do you know what the landowner said? "It was unjust for this tenant to tell him to go to the field and fetch the harvest." Now what do you think about that?