

Church and Community

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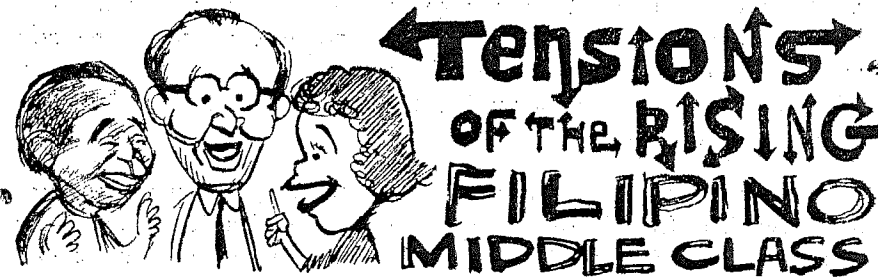
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Moderator: To begin our discussion this morning I would first like to ask Mr. Patanñe, who has written articles on the new middle class, how would he describe the middle class in the Philippines?

E. P. Patanñe: There was a middle class before the war which was characterized by those who belonged to a professional group. They had what you might call upper class aspirations. The engineer, the teacher, the doctor were owners of the status symbols of the elite—namely, land and the paraphernalia which goes with the landed gentry. Then social-mobility was rather slow. After the war there was a fragmentation of family fortunes and many of those who belonged to the upper class before tended to come down to the middle class. The opening of new opportunities for advancement gave those in the middle class and the lower class a chance to move upwards. So we have the phenomenon from 1945 up to now wherein you find people from the lower stratum moving upwards, and those on top having to contend with middle class and lower class peoples in terms of economic or status goals.

A panel presentation at the Urban Pastor's Monday Morning Seminar on "New Forms of City Living"

Participants: Mrs. Mary Hollnsteiner, Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University

Mr. E. P. Patanñe, Journalist with *The Nation*

Rev. Richard P. Poethig, panel moderator, Industrial Life and Vocations, United Church of Christ in the Philippines

Moderator: What are the factors determining the new middle class?

E. P. Patañe: I would say the general factors determining the new middle class would be first, education; second, income; third, the type of dwelling and the location of dwelling, which are the residence characteristics; fourth, the size of family; and I might add finally, possession of surplus wealth.

Moderator: Father John Carroll in a study of Filipino entrepreneurship points out that of the 92 entrepreneurs he interviewed in his study, 21 per cent of them rose from the lower classes. It seems to be quite an achievement that within one's own lifetime a person moves from the lower economic group to the upper group in one big jump. How did people rise so quickly in the post-war era?

E. P. Patañe: I can say this jump is typical of the new Filipino business leader. I'm thinking now of an actual case history. Before the war this fellow was a teacher. Then he joined the army, and after the war went into business. The business didn't pay much at the beginning because of difficulties in getting loans and in developing the market. He was engaged in logging. Later opportunity came when the Philippines signed an agreement with Japan for the exportation of raw timber. Inside of six months to a year he became a millionaire.

Moderator: You are suggesting that fortunes have been made overnight by government policies which favor a particular business?

E. P. Patañe: Yes. Another channel for advancement in this country which we little realize is politics. People may not have the means to enter politics actively. But by force of personality and talent a man may find those in the upper class who will put up the funds for his campaign.

The third type of activity by which many of those in the lower economic groups have advanced is professionalism. Here we may find those people who have gone to Europe or United States and have acquired highly technical skills which are in great demand.

Moderator: Sometime ago I was in a meeting with a Filipino who had been trained in the United States and who was teaching in one of the universities in the Philippines. He said that when his friends got into discussions about their way of life in the Philippines they came to the view that they found it very difficult to be Filipinos after they had returned to the Philippines from the United States. Have you found this to be true, Mrs. Hollnsteiner?

Mrs. Hollnsteiner: I would say that the returning Filipino comes back to the Philippines hoping to do very much the same thing which he sees in the States. However, he faces the problem of the very personalistic nature of ties even in an urban-industrial setting.

He finds that in the Philippines he tends to be judged by his ascribed status, that is, what was his background, what kind of a degree he has. In the United States he was judged primarily on the basis of his achievements. Here he finds that no matter how much he tries to produce, he is cut down by envy on the part of some of the older people in the company. People say, what was he before? They think he is trying to get ahead of them. So often the basis of interaction in the Philippines is in small groups and is on a person-to-person basis. You have to be liked first and then people will judge you according to your achievements.

The Filipino comes back from an achievement-oriented society where he has been judged on what he can produce in his area of knowledge, to a society where too often he is judged on the basis of what kind of a person he is. To the man who is unwilling to take this this is a great source of tension.

Moderator: Sooner or later some people either give in to their culture or return to the United States. Do you find any place within Philippine society groups of similarly-oriented people who are gathering together and beginning to reinforce one another in their aspirations and standards?

Mrs. Hollnsteiner: People who are deviants, because they are non-conformist and will insist on efficiency even if the person is a relative or a good friend of theirs, need to find people with the same kind of value so they can reinforce one another. You can find this in the new medical groups and in the professional societies where people join together and ignore the pressures from the less-interested professionals or the less efficiently oriented individuals in their organizations. Then even if they hear themselves being talked about by the old people, (the older not in age but the people who are traditionally in power), the people can afford to ignore the traditional ones, because they are rewarded by being together with the new group whose friendships and values they appreciate and uphold above the others.

Moderator: With the roots of Philippine culture going so deep it would seem to be very difficult to completely by-pass traditional culture. What would you say is the amalgamation between Western-oriented concepts of achievement and responsibility, and the things which the new middle class will maintain from the Filipino cultural background?

E. P. Patan e: The new middle class, to my thinking, would all have upper-class aspirations toward ownership, that is, owning a car, having home appliances, a stereophonic set, a television, a refrigerator, a washing machine and so on. This would seem to indicate a Western orientation. But again since most of these people have come from the lower economic groups they retain much of the value system of their original group.

Mrs. Hollnsteiner: Well, one problem area certainly is the family. In an urban setting, or in case of the new middle class, the extended family relationship becomes dysfunctional. In the traditional society it is expected that once a person gets more wealth the whole family can put claims on him — to send a second cousin to school in Manila, to help in the wedding of a more distant relative. This sort of thing the urban Filipino is beginning to resent. He seeks ways of evading the responsibilities which the traditional system places upon him. His emphasis now is being placed more on his wife and children and parents than the kindred as a whole group.

Moderator: The family studies which are being done in both Malate and Tondo point out that the extended family obligations seem to be growing in the city. What are some of the ways in which people seek to avoid having to take this responsibility for the extended family?

Mrs. Hollnsteiner: Urban Filipinos begin buying on installment. They'll buy a sewing machine, maybe a piano, probably a refrigerator, sometimes a TV set. When people come asking for a loan, they will say "We haven't even got our check yet." "Our expenses are automatically deducted." Or they'll put money in a savings account which is hard to get at.

Moderator: This attitude toward wealth would be directly counter to Fr. Frank Lynch's analysis of society. He suggests that the concept of good in Philippine society is like a pie. Since there is only so much pie, if you get more than your share, then you are taking part of my share.

Mrs. Hollnsteiner: Yes, this is the conflict. The new Filipino feels he has the right to decide how to spend his money. But of course his extended relatives do not see it this way.

Moderator: What do you think then are some of the factors which will determine the way the new middle class will go?

Mrs. Hollnsteiner: Traditionally the average Filipino goes in a great deal for social acceptance. In the traditional system he would spend widely

when he had the money. But the new Filipino will try to maintain this notion of wanting to be liked but not above other characteristics. He will tend to be more satisfied with getting the acceptance of a smaller group of those who are really important to him.

Moderator: Mr. Patan e, what are the characteristics of the wealthy?

E. P. Patan e: When you define the wealthy in this country you should list three very important factors. They have social status, they have money, they have political influence. I can make a distinction between the urban wealthy group who are the Malate people who once belonged to the old aristocracy and the wealthy who are rurally-oriented. These are the big name families you find in the provinces who have invested in the cities. The Lopezes, the Aranetas — these are people basically rurally oriented who have moved with their statuses, and with their investments into the city. Here they have found new life which is a mixture of social prestige, economic security and political power.

Moderator: Do the wealthy also engender social change?

E. P. Patan e: You have big families owning factories, corporations or banks. Relatives and close kin work in these banks and businesses. This seems to be the pattern. The non-relative employees are often old ones who may have served the owner in other capacities in previous businesses. I can think of people who have worked in haciendas in Negros moving to Manila to work in a big corporation owned by the same family.

Moderator: Do you think the present upper class will continue to be the leaders in industrialization?

E. P. Patan e: There is what I would call a two-generation-theory. Today you can find the wealthy entrepreneurs characterized as being monopolistic and paternalistic. You find this everywhere. According to the theory this would continue for about one generation. Since most of these families tend to have many children, the next generation would see a fragmentation of this wealth. The Lopezes will have to divide their wealth among so many children. In terms of economic development the hope of moving forward may depend on the son or daughter who has picked up progressive ideas. There would be those who would inherit a lot of wealth and who would dissipate this wealth. There are others, who imbued with the ideas of modern industry, will use the wealth to develop the industrial sector.