

OPENING REMARKS

Ponciano L. Bennagen*

Dr. Joseph Madamba, Colleagues and Friends, Good morning:

At the outset, on behalf of the organization, let me thank most sincerely our guest speaker today, Dr. Joseph Madamba of the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Resources Research for having generously extended financial and moral support to the organization. It is not an exaggeration when I say that without PCARR's support, we would not be holding this conference right here and now. Let me hasten to add, however, that we have him today as guest speaker not so much as an appreciation of the financial support that PCARR has given us as it is a recognition of the perspective that he is to provide us today. Because he heads an organization that continually wrestles with the gut problems of an agricultural country, we feel that what he has to say will pull us down from our ivory tower to the present-day realities of Philippine society and culture.

At any rate, let me welcome you all to the 1st National Conference of UGAT. It is with some trepidation that I stand before you today because there is so much that I would like to say about how this conference got organized, but the situation now overwhelms me — I can't believe it is all happening. For if my memory serves me right, in a manner of speaking, it took all of ten years to prepare for this occasion. I remember that since the late 60's, there have already been attempts to bring anthropologists and related professionals together to discuss disciplinary concerns.

Last year, we, of the UP Department of Anthropology, realizing more than ever the need for an organization of anthropologists decided to give it another try. I remember very clearly that when I discussed the idea of getting ourselves organized with Prof. E. Arsenio Manuel, he said he was all for it. He did say something to the effect that the job must now belong to the younger generation as he felt that the senior generation no longer has the energy, and I suppose the time, to set up house.

The task of initiating organizational dialogues fell on the shoulders of the members of the Committee on Extension and

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Special Programs of the Department under the able leadership of Israel Cabanilla. Everyone who we thought had the slightest interest in anthropology was invited. The initial response was not as massive as we expected, but those who came to the meetings brought along a considerable amount of contagious energy and enthusiasm. Representatives from a number of institutions within Metro Manila came to subsequent meetings and participated in the framing of a constitution and in the planning of a national conference.

So here we are now. For this, let us thank and welcome ourselves, you and I, in one moment of self-indulgence, for having come here to create a watershed in the history of Philippine anthropology.

As the first organizational activity, therefore, we thought that we should look back to find out what we have accomplished so far so that we can do better anthropology – in keeping with the conditions of our age. Hence, the theme of the conference: *Philippine Anthropology Today*.

To my mind, every people, each in its own time, must create its own anthropology, that is to say, its own understanding of its humanity even as this humanity is being refracted by others.

I believe that it is now time for Filipinos to create more consciously their own appropriate anthropology. This does not mean that in so doing we should close our doors to other anthropologies, that we should isolate ourselves. That would be folly. It really means that as we study ourselves, we critically learn from others and integrate lessons so learned into the conditions, theory and practice of Philippine anthropology. *Sa ganito, ang Aghamtao ay magiging Aghampilipino at ang Aghampilipino ay magiging Aghamtao sa patuloy at resiprokal na pagpapayaman ng partikular at unibersal na diwa ng antropolohiya.*

Towards this end, we should all work together, our foreign friends included (at the risk of their being accused of foreign intervention in local intellectual affairs!).

In keeping with the status of the organization and the conditions under which we hold this conference, the order of the day, therefore – and on this, I want to be brief and emphatic – is: simple living coupled with serious thinking and doing.

And so today, we begin.

Marami pong salamat.

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Joseph C. Madamba*

It is indeed a great privilege to be invited to speak before a prestigious group of noted scientists and researchers like yours. Much more so when one is given the task to set the tone of a scientific meeting which attempts to project into a wider perspective two very important issues of the day: Man and Development.

Providing a healthy climate for a more down-to-earth discussion of topics which, it is sad to say, are more often than not defined in their abstractist forms in high-level conferences is a rather challenging assignment.

It is true that in such a task one cannot help but consider Society as a whole – starting with man as the center of everything, the milieu in which he revolves and the events and the circumstances that mould him into what everyone expects him to be. But a better understanding of man in the context of development can better be achieved if we approach the issue from the pragmatic point of view. Specifically, by having a clear picture of the segments of the population as a whole, on the one hand, and of the development process as a mechanism through which the welfare of the people can be fostered, on the other hand.

In such an undertaking, one has to identify the sector from whose creative minds and painstaking toils spring development programs, and that portion of the population who should be the beneficiaries of such programs. In not so few conferences, symposia and seminars, heated arguments ensue when MAN as the topical item takes the center stage. More so when one starts defining things.

In the developing world, for instance, it has become fashionable in recent years to define PEOPLE as those who compose the less privileged segment of the population who, notwithstanding the fact that they have been the targets of development programs have not been benefited by such programs. In the case of the Philippines, they are the “rural poor” who constitute the greater bulk of the country’s population – the landless farmers or those land tillers who own small landholdings, the marginal or artisanal

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(1972-1978).

fish farmers and fishermen, the forestry operators, the rural women and out-of-school youths.

While we cannot fault such development planners for their "righteous bias," we should not overlook the fact that the less fortunate people are but one of the components of the society to which also belong the government policy makers and development workers, the members of the intellectual community and the like who likewise have a significant role to play.

The word DEVELOPMENT, on the other hand, now appears to be one of the much abused terms today. Hard-core academicians, economists, theorists and scientists have made it a matter of course to have their own definition of the word from the standpoint of their respective disciplines. And it is lamentable to note that not so few people are now asking if they really mean what they say. I have been told that in anthropology, development is viewed as cultural elaboration i.e. enhancement of the people's way of life.

Not long ago, for instance, an internationally known agricultural scientist gave credence to the crystallizing notion that some scientists or researchers are the constraints to progress themselves. In a soul-searching statement issued during an international scientific conference in Los Baños two years ago, Dr. Sterling Wortman, President of the International Agricultural Development Services (IADS), said:

"Many of us, as scientists, are criticized as neither involved nor really interested in efforts to solve the problems, to organize the action program or to train the people. We have hesitated in helping to determine and work toward well-defined national goals against which success or failure — our success or failure—could be measured. It is alleged that most of us are more conservative, think smaller, are less bold, than either governments or farmers — that agriculturists, especially scientists, are among those most responsible for slow progress."

We would likewise wish to add another observation that as a developing country scientist advances in knowledge through academic preparation, he appears to acquire some kind of an elitist/know-it-all attitude that tends to make him cringe at dealing with the more mundane problems of development because he would not want to "dirty his hands" with such provincialist considerations.

Thus, it appears that somewhere in the learning process of graduate school (the curricula of which are still essentially bor-

rowed from developed societies) the developing country specialist tends to acquire the "bad habits" of *ultra-conservatism* and *elitism*. I wonder what the anthropological explanation for this could be? There is therefore an urgent need for major surgery of our graduate and even under-graduate curricula so that we may excise the sources of ultra-conservatism and elitism in our existing curricula, mix and replace these with the inculcation of a mission oriented approach as well as inject a sluse of urgency attitude in tackling development problems.

It has been the experience of developing countries, the Philippines included, that past, and even present national goals are not realized in view of the failure of those charting so-called development programs to dovetail such programs to the basic requirements of their target audiences. Too often, they give way to their propensity to think and plan for the projected beneficiaries of their efforts, present to them things in the proverbial platter and also make the mistake for them.

Allow me to stress here that development must revolve around people, not things. I understand that this is also the conviction of your discipline. The fruits of science and technology are beneficial only when people are willing and capable to make use of them. To attain such an ideal state, therefore, it behooves those who are in a position to make life easier for everyone to evolve a mechanism through which progress finds its way to the doorsteps of our less privileged countrymen.

Admittedly, one of the prerequisites for development is the continuous improvement of technology and the evolvment of new ones and that such technology should be appropriately humanized so that it serves the interest of the people on a location-specific as well as situation-specific basis. And this can only be assured through the intensification of research and education.

But I wish to emphasize here that a technology -- whether "borrowed", indigenized, or developed locally -- can only be useful and relevant if they suit the prevailing conditions in a given country. Allow me to digress for a while and point up the snow-balling efforts of international research and development support institutions to generate interest in the evolvment of location- and situation-specific technologies, particularly in Third World countries. For instance, in an international meeting in Bellagio, Italy, last year, scientists from developing societies drafted the Bellagio Declaration of 1977 which, among other things, advocated the

development of locally adaptable technologies. If I may be permitted to quote a portion of the historic Declaration:

While concepts and basic research material can be adapted by one country from another, the precise technology will have to be developed locally and tailored to the conditions of each area in such a way that the ecological strengths of an area are maximized and the ecological risks and handicaps are minimized.

Be that as it may, let me stress further that technology generation is but one of the components of the so-called technological process. It is deemed indispensable that a development worker should consider the process as a continuum – from technology generation to technology verification and packaging and finally to technology dissemination. For a snag somewhere would certainly affect the other components of the system. A viable methodology thus should be adopted such that the components could move in one direction and also back in order to have forward and backward linkages of technology transfer and problem feedback.

Perhaps, you may disagree with my view that the most critical aspect of the system is the technology dissemination. It is because it is here where the development workers come face to face with the people who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the technology generated. People who, steeped in age-old traditions, find it hard to sacrifice the known of their very personal and intimate heritage for the culture-shocking implications of scientific and technological headways. It is true that a great bulk of the people may have caught glimpses of a better world through the application of scientific processes, but the problem is that most of them are reluctant to part with the ways of life they have known for so long.

Social scientists like you do not at all find such a situation strange. One only has to delve deeper into the factors that shaped man into what he is today to understand the reasons why such attitudes still prevail. Now exposed to the societal forces that threaten to change his lifestyle, man finds himself in a situation wherein he either makes himself a part of the development process of an emerging tradition at the expense of the old traditions that he cherishes or vice versa.

In the field of agriculture, for instance, our food producers and their counterparts in other developing countries found themselves in such a predicament in the sixties when the high yielding varieties of rice and wheat were developed by the International

Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Wheat and Corn Improvement Center (CIMMYT) in Mexico, respectively. Tilling their farmlands the antiquated way, they woke up one day to find that the so-called "miracle" rice has arrived and with it the scientific method of growing it. You are all aware of the initial resistance our farmers had put up. Even today, many of our land tillers do not yet subscribe to the new rice technology, as evidenced by the fact that while researchers and scientists are turning out about 8 tons of rice per hectare per crop in experimental farms and field-testing stations, majority of our farmers still are harvesting an average of 1.78 tons per hectare per crop.

The experience of the past decades suggests that man, regardless of how traditional he is, is willing, though perhaps gradually, to absorb something new if it meaningfully spells a better life. It likewise acknowledges that a better understanding of man in his totality -- his capabilities, his problems as well as assets that could be developed to the fullest -- can enhance his opportunities for progress.

It really takes time to change the attitude of people. We cannot do it overnight; sometimes it takes generations. This is particularly true with the people in agricultural communities who, unlike their counterparts in the big cities and urban centers, are not vigorously buffeted by the winds of change. Revolving within the limited confines of their small world, the idea of change seldom crosses their mind because life has been that way for as long as they could remember.

However, the reality we are faced with is the fact that most of our extension development programs heavily project the bias of the extension workers and planners on what technology the farmers or end-users need. Up to now, there has still been no serious effort to get at the root of the actual situation in understanding how the farmer receives, evaluates, accepts and utilizes new technology.

Thus Mr. Extension Worker finds the challenges that he faces in trying to influence for the better lives of the rural people very formidable. This becomes easily understandable when one realizes that there are five stages that he has to go through.

First, he must create an awareness of the possibilities of a better and meaningful life through the adoption of the modern or scientific methods of production. Then he has to generate interest in these technologies. Third, he has to involved the farmers in charting the production strategies. Fourth, he and the farmers

have to test such technologies against the realities in the farmlands. The last stage is the adoption of such technologies if they have been found viable and relevant. Essentially, in all these stages, the farmers/end-users of technology should be involved meaningfully and not reduced to being merely acceptors of technology.

Indeed, changing the attitude of many farmers has always been a formidable barrier that separates them from extension specialists. And this has remained the greatest challenge to rural and agricultural development workers insofar as the practice of his calling is concerned.

Experiences of developing countries, however, tend to indicate that many food producers cannot be totally faulted for such attitude. Part of the blame can be put at the doorsteps of research institutions as well as on the extension workers and policy-makers. And such pitfalls also tend to indicate their lack of understanding of the farmers as an individual, of the role he plays in his community and his concepts of involvement in the overall task of nation building.

Summing up, I wish to conclude that a better understanding of man and the many facets of his life can do wonders for a developing country like ours. That development is both a process and a social product. And it must be borne in mind that it is not alone the result of the activities of policy makers, researchers, scientists, extension workers and food producers. It is the result of the active and productive participation of each citizen.

Thank you and good day.