

THE PHILIPPINE FEDERATION OF FREE FARMERS

A Case Study in Mass Agrarian Organizations

SONYA DIANE CATER



DATA PAPER NUMBER 35
SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF FAR EASTERN STUDIES
CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, NEW YORK

PRICE \$2.00

MAY, 1959

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THE CORNELL UNIVERSITY SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM

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FOREWORD

Miss Sonya Diane Cater completed her final undergraduate year at the University of the Philippines, receiving the Bachelor of Arts degree from that institution in March 1956. During 1955-56, Miss Cater--in sharp contrast to the extra-curricular activities of the average undergraduate--chose to work with and to study the Federation of Free Farmers. The emergence of the FFF coincided with the emergence of Magsaysay--the former was inaugurated two weeks before the Presidential election in November 1953--and the leadership of the FFF identified closely with the agrarian reform program of Magsaysay. The leadership of the FFF aspired to create a non-revolutionary agrarian movement through which the numerically dominant agrarian population could mobilize and transmit its potential political power.

Miss Cater came to Cornell in the fall of 1956 for graduate work in the Department of Government and in the Cornell Southeast Asia Program. She was encouraged to continue her study of Philippine agrarian problems and in particular to analyze the Federation of Free Farmers as a case study of a mass agrarian organization. The present study is a revised version of her M.A. thesis.

Study of the FFF suggests that an effective non-revolutionary movement among the depressed agrarian classes will develop slowly. The experience of the FFF and earlier attempts to organize the peasantry leave one skeptical of the possibility of emergence of effective non-revolutionary peasant leadership. Isolation of the elite leadership of the FFF persisted in spite of the efforts of that leadership to establish rapport with their peasant constituents. The excessive centralization of the FFF--reflecting the insecurity of the elite leadership--can only inhibit "grass-roots" participation which is essential to the exercise of political power.

Frank H. Golay

Cornell University
Ithaca, New York
May 28, 1959

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INTRODUCTION

A discussion of Philippine agrarian organizations should rightfully begin with an analysis of the dominant pattern of landlord-tenant relationships. For the mass movements which have appeared on the Philippine rural scene from earliest times up to the present have largely been directed against the abuses arising out of this system.

The Federation of Free Farmers is only the most recent response to the maladjustments in Philippine land tenure.

Agricultural tenancy in the Philippines has long been a source of acute peasant discontent, particularly in the overpopulated areas of Central Luzon where "landlordism" exists in a more virulent form.¹ The average Filipino "tao" (farmer) living under this system has found increasing difficulty in maintaining an economically independent status. Exploitative cropsharing practices, excessive farm rental and loan rates plus inadequate credit and marketing facilities and the absence of subsidiary, nonagricultural pursuits, have all operated to keep peasant income and employment at extremely low levels. As a tenant working an uneconomic small farm plot (averaging less than two hectares) with an archaic technology unfitted to efficient land use, the tao has generally been unable to progress above the margin of subsistence.

The Filipino peasant, furthermore, has been handicapped by his lack of education. Rarely able to obtain more than a minimum four years of primary schooling, he has remained relatively uninformed of the basic principles of representative government and he has had little understanding of his legal or constitutional prerogatives. Consequently his role as a citizen in a democratic republic has been neglected. And he has likewise had little recourse to the courts as a means of protecting his interests.

Well-conceived programs for rural amelioration and agrarian reform are obviously needed to restore the balance in agrarian society. Yet successive Philippine governments - dominated by a landed aristocracy² and bent on maintaining the status quo - have made only token gestures towards reform of the tenancy system.

In short, the pattern of Philippine land tenure has proved to be one of the greatest obstacles to the development of democratic institutions in the Island Republic.

* * * * *

¹ The frequency of tenancy averages approximately 35% for the nation as a whole while in areas such as Central Luzon, tenancy is as high as 70%.

² Members of the landed class are commonly referred to as "caciques."

Without full access to political and legal channels of redress, and perennially confronted by government inertia, the majority of rural citizens have been powerless to better their condition through democratic processes and have therefore turned to other means.

In the past, peasant unrest found expression in small-scale agrarian movements - the Colorums of the 1920's, for example, or the Tanguans and Sakdalistas of the next decade - which frequently erupted in "violence to be followed by government suppression rather than amelioration". More recently, in the dislocation consequent to World War II, the Hukbalahap¹ movement produced an instability in the countryside which threatened to undermine the existing political order".

To an unprecedented extent, Hukbalahap strength was derived from local agrarian tensions and increasingly represented the aspirations of the peasantry not only for land reform and a political voice, but for equality and human dignity as well. Under the leadership of men like Luis Tarue, the Hukbalahap was able to win an estimated 100,000 adherents including an effective force of 12,000 guerrillas provisioned by and recruited from the countryside.

Well entrenched in Luzon at the end of World War II, the Hukbalahap, for the first five years of Philippine independence, was able to thwart efforts of the republican government to reduce its military strength and to alienate its peasant support. Unable to negotiate with the Huks, the government resorted to full-scale military operations against the "dis-sidents." This policy achieved only limited success in its early phase. In fact it served to antagonize the rural populace in Central Luzon; barrios were shelled indiscriminately, normal agricultural activities were disrupted and poorly disciplined government troops often mistreated peasants suspected as actual or potential Huks. Likewise, the government's attempt at appeasement through various land reform measures proved wholly inadequate for rural needs.

Subject to governmental pressures, the Hukbalahap came increasingly under Communist leadership which gradually lost the loyalty of its peasant following. Subsequent to the national election of unusual violence and fraud in 1949, the Hukbalahap was converted into the HMA or "Peoples' Liberation Army" which openly aspired to overthrow the republican government by armed force.

¹Hukbalahap can be translated as "The Peoples' Army Against the Japanese." Members are generally termed "Huks."

However, the measures introduced by Ramon Magpaysay when Secretary of Defense in 1950-1953 greatly lessened the threat of Communist revolution and drove the Huks underground. The emergence of still another mass agrarian organization - the Federation of Free Farmers - coincided with the decline of the Huk movement. Reflecting the Filipino peasant's desire to redress his social and economic insecurity, the Federation of Free Farmers, in contrast to previous mass movements, has adopted a program in harmony with democratic processes. No subversion of the existing order is contemplated; rather agrarian reform is to be attempted through the FFF formula of "democratic revolution." To what extent the Federation of Free Farmers, as a mass agrarian organization, has been, or will be able to act as an effective channel for change is a question which is explored in this study.

1. PRELUDE

The Magsaysay Era

In one sense it might be said that the HMB - the former Hukbalahap - was the vehicle by which a relatively unknown Liberal Congressman from Zambales Province made his spectacular rise to power. It was President Quirino of the Liberal Party who, faced with a dissident movement under the guidance of the HMB leadership that threatened the very government he headed, appointed Ramon Magsaysay as his Secretary of National Defense in September of 1950. Magsaysay, or RM as he came to be called, won national approbation in the ensuing contest with the HMB. The strategy he employed was double-edged. By determined military effort facilitated by his reorganization of the armed forces and through a land resettlement scheme known as EDCOR,¹ the Defense Secretary was able to reduce the Huk threat. He succeeded in capturing the majority of the HMB "Politburo" and ultimately brought about the surrender of the former Huk Supremo,² Luis Taruc, thus effectively dismembering the HMB. Although Magsaysay later broke with President Quirino and resigned as Secretary of National Defense, he had established strong loyalties among the rural populace and had gained the attention of political party leaders. His subsequent defection from the Liberal Party and his candidacy for President under the banner of the Nacionalistas is now a matter of Philippine political history.

With Magsaysay's ascension to the Presidency of the Philippines in 1953, a new era was inaugurated - the Magsaysay era. The special significance of his administration with regard to mass agrarian organizations resides in the fact that a new philosophy of the "common man" was heard and felt in the halls of Congress and the palatial rooms of Malacanang. The old political refrain of rural amelioration took on a different meaning. For as RM himself stated: "We must deliver the substance of democracy to the people; we must return to the barrio." With a restless energy and an unrestrained impatience with administrative negligence, the President set out to work for "the people" with a fervor that at times belied his political experience, but that nevertheless was indicative of his intentions.

He attempted to reverse the persistent attitudes and position of the political hierarchy concerning the barrio population. He pledged himself and the government to a revitalized, if not novel, line of official action in meeting the needs and aspirations of the Filipino tao. His pledge was sincere and if it was not fully realized, it nonetheless created a new social and political atmosphere in which the Filipino tao could again hope for "better times to come."

¹ The EDCOR or Economic Development Corps was the Army's resettlement project initiated under the Quirino regime. Through the project "reformed" Huks were resettled primarily in the sparsely populated southern island of Mindanao where they were given land and a chance to begin a "new life" as farmers. The EDCOR projects were highly publicized in order to counter the propaganda of the Huks.

² Luis Taruc officially surrendered on May 14, 1954 when Magsaysay was President. He was jailed and has not been released.

2.

But President Magsaysay was not alone in espousing the cause of the "common man." For other groups and individuals, aware of the advantages to be gained by identifying their interests with those of the tao, were also beginning to speak in his terms - in terms of the uplift of the poverty stricken rural masses. One such group was the Federation of Free Farmers which was to title itself "a national, independent, private, lay, non-political organization whose paramount aim is to promote the material and moral welfare of the barrio farmers and to strengthen the cause of freedom, prosperity and peace in our country."¹

Evolution of the FFF

It is not surprising, in view of the new opportunities for social and political advancement opened by RM's "back-to-the-barrio" movement, that the birth of the Federation of Free Farmers was coincident with the Magsaysay regime. The Free Farmers movement grew out of a plan, entitled "Plows and Peace", which was devised by a young lawyer, Jeremias Montemayor, who was later to become FFF President. Predicated on the assumption that "the basic problem of the Filipino farmer is insufficient production", "Plows and Peace" embodied a formula for farm mechanization through a cooperative movement.² Specifically, the plan called for cooperation on the barrior, rather than the national, level as so many plans sponsored by the government had been. It was to begin in a single barrio where five to ten adjoining small landowners were to unite and, pooling their resources, were to purchase a small tractor and otherwise adopt scientific methods of farming. In the early part of 1953 the scheme actually got underway with the establishment of the Association of Free Farmers in Barrio Bisocol, Alaminos, Pangesinan. Though the Bisocol farmers did agree to form an association and, in fact, contributed the 2,000 pesos necessary for the tractor project, it did not in the long run materialize. Nonetheless the Association was not dissolved for it was to become one of the first units of the FFF.

A secondary impetus was to come indirectly in the way of encouragement and advice received through the offices of Fr. Walter Hogan, well-known Jesuit trade-union leader in the Philippines, and from the Institute of Social Order (ISO). Fr. Hogan's role in the founding of the Federation of Free Farmers came as a result of his association with Jeremias Montemayor in 1953 when he offered to help the latter in the application of the "Plows and Peace" concept.³ Although the scheme failed, the two maintained contact through the ISO.

¹Federation of Free Farmers, A Report on Operations (from October, 1953 to June, 1956), p. 1.

²See The Manila Times, July 12-July 19, 1953 for serialization of "Plows and Peace".

³The Society of Jesus had this to say of Fr. Hogan's role: "...Mr. Montemayor encountered the natural suspicions of the farmers until he was able to induce Father Walter B. Hogan to visit the barrio (Bisocol) and by his visit to convince the people that Mr. Montemayor's proposal was inspired only by good will towards them. This was not yet the Federation of Free Farmers, but it contained the two key ideas of the later organization: physical and moral strength through unity; spiritual sanity through religious motivation." Philippine Studies, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 1954 (published in Manila by the Society of Jesus), p. 172.

The Institute of Social Order was initiated by Fr. Hogan in 1946 to serve as a type of "clearing house" for social thought as well as an advisory body primarily concerned with the problems of industrial unionization. A Catholic inspired organization, it is mainly ethical and ecclesiastical in its approach. Fr. Hogan enunciated the Institute's philosophy when he said:

The Church has the right and the duty to explain clearly what is morally right and wrong in the relation between labor and capital as in the matter of family life. . . The Church does not hesitate to preach that it is a mortal sin for anyone knowingly to transgress the workers' right to form an association and to bargain collectively.¹

From this philosophy, as it was applied through the efforts of Fr. Hogan and the ISO, the FFF was to derive much of its guiding spirit as well as its essentially Catholic theory of labor. Moreover, several Jesuit fathers on the staff of the Institute were to become more or less permanent advisors of the Federation.

The activities of the Institute have been directed primarily towards promotion of the free trade-union movement. For implicit in the teachings of the Order is the idea that "the individual must work directly upon the social medium in which he is incorporated and upon the institutions by which it can be controlled and only through them upon society as a whole."² In accordance with this so-called "structural approach," the problem of the workingman has been attacked from what is considered as one of its most important angles - its organizational aspect. With this in mind a Catholic trade-union - The Federation of Free Workers - was formed in 1950 under the auspices of the Institute of Social Order. Among those who took an active part in the organizational campaigns of the FFW, acquiring thereby considerable training as labor recruiters, were several future leaders of the FFF.

For the first few years the FFW concentrated exclusively on unionization of industrial workers, but it was not long before it began to take an interest in the peasantry. In August of 1953, the FFW established the Pampanga Tenant's Association of PATAS through the organizational efforts of Fernando Esguerra and under the presidency of Antonio Abibuag - both to become Vice-Presidents of the FFF. PATAS leaders claimed no less than 500 tenants after only two weeks of campaigning.³ The enthusiastic response of the tenants indicated the future possibilities of such an agrarian labor front. As

¹ See Manila Bulletin, April 27, 1952.

² Fr. Arthur Weiss, "Jesuit Social Apostolate," Philippine Studies, Vol. 4, 1956, p. 276.

³ The Free Worker, August 1953 (Published in Manila by the Federation of Free Workers.)

4.

Antonio Abibuag expressed it:

The advent of the new era in labor with emphasis on an urgent solution to the agrarian problems has made the tenant masses realize that this is the time for them to unify into a solid front in accordance with accepted democratic concepts such as collective bargaining and to coordinate with the government in putting an end to the agrarian unrest which dates back to pre-war days.

The activities of the PATAS were to be coordinated with the other FFW locals by Esguerra who was then the FFW representative assigned to organize workers in Central Luzon. The PATAS as such, however, was shortlived as it was subsequently absorbed in the Federation of Free Farmers.

It was in the Labor and Management School of the Institute of Social Order, initiated in 1948 by Fr. Hogan, that Fernando Esguerra met Jeremias Montemayor who was then lecturing in the School. The two found many of their interests to be mutual and they mapped out plans for what they termed "The Federation of Free Farmers." At first Fr. Hogan, apparently motivated by his primary concern with strengthening the Federation of Free Workers, tried to insist that the nascent FFF and the FFW be a joint organization. But the dispute which arose as to which movement - agrarian or industrial - was most important and should therefore receive the greatest support, was settled in an informal conference in the fall of 1953. At this time it was agreed that the FFF and the FFW would remain as separate and independent entities.¹ Thereafter the former PATAS of the FFW and Montemayor's Alaminos farmers were combined as the Federation of Free Farmers.

The FFF received its formal inauguration on October 25, 1953 in Porac, San Fernando, Pampanga, thus anticipating by some five months President Magsaysay who was to issue a statement in March 1954 urging the organization of farmer's unions among the barrio people.² National officers were likewise inducted in Porac with Montemayor and Esguerra designating themselves as President and Vice-President respectively; the first FFF Manifesto was also proclaimed at this time.³

¹Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor, November 12, 1955, personal interview.

²See LABOR (Manila), March 2, 1954.

³See Appendix I for text of the Manifesto.

II. FRAMEWORK AND COMPOSITION

Leadership

The Federation of Free Farmers has elicited a response from various segments of Philippine society. The movement has drawn into its upper ranks a large number of lawyers and professionals from the landed class in addition to a minority of leaders of peasant origin. This latter group - reared in the barrio, relatively uneducated and of little economic or social standing - comprises a nascent "grass roots" leadership which, if fully developed, should give the movement its greatest propulsion in the future.

Among those in the FFF there are doubtless many who genuinely believe that leadership of the peasantry offers a "new opportunity" to Filipino patriots - the rationals advanced by the FFF founders when they stated:

...It is important for the strengthening of democracy in our country that good men take over the leadership of the masses through a private organization. Until recently, the only people who saw the importance of organizing the farmers have been communists. Because of their insight and diligence, they almost succeeded in wresting power from the duly constituted authorities. But now is a chance for us who believe in freedom and democracy to take the lead.¹

But agrarian leadership under a regime anxious to reassert itself among the peasantry also promises to be an advantageous pursuit. For to command a large following among the rural citizenry is to pave the way to what may eventually be a position of influence and power both in local and national political affairs. Hence it is equally as probable that many have attached themselves to the Federation of Free Farmers largely from motives of personal political advancement rather than concern for the uplift of the masses. However, regardless of motivation, the Federation can claim an impressive roster of officials.

The self-named President of the Federation, Jeremias Montemayor, is a descendant of "caciques" as are many of his FFF labor associates; he is, in fact, related to three-fourths of the landowning class in Pangasinan. An Ateneo law graduate and valedictorian, he emerged, in the tradition of the college, as one of the highest candidates in the annual bar examinations.² His career as a professional lawyer was, however, of short duration. Though he was employed for some time as legal counsel for the Catholic Welfare Organization, he was later dismissed from his position ostensibly for supporting a strike of the CWO Workers Union. In 1953, following the trend in public interest, he chose to enter the field of agrarian labor, establishing the Federation of Free Farmers. As FFF President he soon attained recognition in labor circles when in 1955 he was selected as one of the "top ten"

¹ The Federation of Free Farmers, A Report on Operations (from October, 1953 to June 1956.)

² The Ateneo de Manila, one of the pro-American Philippine Schools, was first developed by the Spanish Jesuits and later, in 1921, it came under the American Jesuit order. Maintaining high academic standards, the school is noted for its outstanding law graduates. Many have figured prominently in the national competitive examinations held in Manila.

union leaders by the Labor Reporters Association of the Philippines.¹ In addition to the FFF presidency, Montemayor is currently Dean of the Ateneo de Manila College of Law.

Montemayor at present wields great influence in the Free Farmers movement and is, thus far, its unchallenged leader. He formulates all major policies for the organization and has established its basic set of guiding principles, the latter being drawn chiefly from Catholic doctrine. Montemayor is, however, far more of a propagandist than a so-called theoretician! He is one of the more vocal exponents of the "back-to-the-barrio" maxim and running as a consistent strain throughout the major portion of his writings is the slogan: "It's high time we go back to the barrios." He further asserts - almost echoing Luis Taruc - that "a leader must go to his people"; he must be acquainted with "the ways, characters, the conditions, the work and the life of the people." For only in this way, Montemayor claims, can the leader win most effectively the loyalties and sympathies of the masses; "only thus can he lead them."² Consequently, the FFF President has sought to apply what he terms the "grass roots technique" in order to thereby identify the leadership with the peasantry.

Also credited with founding the Federation of Free Farmers, is Fernando Esguerra. Although Esguerra is no longer associated with the FFF, he played a prominent role in FFF affairs from 1953 until October 1957. As former Executive Vice-President and chief of the Educational Department, his influence was felt on both the policy-making level of the National FFF and on the organizational level of the barrio. In fact many of the schemes now being implemented by the Federation originated with him.

The background of Esguerra contrasts with that of the FFF President. With no landed connections and equipped with only a minimum of education, he began his labor activities at the age of 19 in such unions as the Trade and Rizal Workers; and on occasion found himself in jail for his involvement in labor unionization.³ Esguerra's later affiliation with the Federation of Free Workers brought him into prominence as a labor leader and hence into the Free Farmers movement. He gained particular notice in unionizing the transportation workers of The Central Luzon La Mallorca-Pambusco and was consequently elected to the presidency of one of its more important and active locals. Only upon establishment of the FFF did Esguerra sever his ties with the FFW leaving the industrial labor movement to join the agrarian.

Together with Esguerra in the FFW were two, now well-known FFF leaders, Antonio Abibuag and Segundo Gonazles. Antonio Abibuag, a permanent member of the highest governing organ of the FFF and for some time its Vice-President,

¹Letter from Montemayor to the Labor Reporters Association, May 23, 1955.

²Jeremias Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 36.

³Information obtained from Mr. Esguerra, January 16, 1956, personal interview.

is a former provincial newspaper editor. He also served for a period with the Army and was, in addition, an officer in the Military Intelligence Service having graduated from its school as a fingerprint expert. In his later role as Acting President of the FFW's Pampanga Tenant's Association, he became associated with Esguerra and through him, the FFF. Segundo Gonzales, once Esguerra's Vice-President in the FFW's Transportation Workers' Local, exemplifies the type of "grass roots" leadership which the FFF considers essential to its development. Though a man relatively uneducated, he has nonetheless achieved notability if not notoriety as both President of the Bulacan FFF Chapter and as a Protestant pastor - a somewhat singular figure in a predominantly Catholic group. He is outspoken in his partisanship of the FFF but has displayed considerable initiative and an honesty in action that his followers are quick to affirm.¹

An FFF leader who has come to acquire an increasingly prominent position in national affairs as both Legal Counsel and President of the Tarlac Free Farmers Association is Thelmo Escalona. An ambitious and talented young lawyer, Escalona was a former Ateneo classmate of Montemayor's and, like the latter, comes from a landowning family. Escalona, who is considered by many to be one of the FFF's most valuable leaders, serves on the National Policy Board of the FFF - its sole policy-making body.

The Free Farmers claims the loyalty of a wide variety of individuals including ex-Huks and former Communists. Perhaps one of the most colorful of FFF local leaders is Leonardo Vega, President of the Camarines Norte FFF and regional coordinator of the Bicol region.² Vega, an older man of little formal education, was onetime President of the Samahan Magsasaka - a farmers' union formed in 1947 and subsequently incorporated into the FFF. A former guerrilla leader during the Japanese Occupation, he attained a nation-wide reputation when he shot the former Japanese puppet President of the Philippines, Jose Laurel, Sr., who survived and later pardoned his would-be assassin. Vega thereafter became for a time one of Laurel's most resolute promoters as well as his constant bodyguard during election tours.

Not to be excluded from the upper ranks of the FFF is its National Chaplain and Advisor, Fr. Hector Mauri, who in this capacity wields extensive influence among the FFF officialdom as well as the rank and file. He is, in fact, one of the Federation's most zealous organizers, having unionized great numbers of agricultural laborers in the Visayas. As the National FFF advisor, he has been a participant in all major FFF activities and is the author of the Federation's land reform program.

¹Based on the writer's personal observations and affirmed by other FFF officials.

² The Bicol region encompasses the southern provinces of Luzon.

Fr. Mauri, an Italian Jesuit and son of a pre-Mussof'ini Italian Minister of Agriculture, was assigned to the FFF by the Batican on petition from Montemayor. He spent fourteen years in China under both the Kuomintang and Communist regimes and while there lived and worked among the rural populace. A man of great energy and tiref'ess enthusiasm, he has had considerable training in the field of economics both in the United States and abroad. He is specially trained in cooperatives and has supervised the management of the FFF Cooperative movement'. Fr. Mauri is likewise on the staff of the Institute of Social Order'.

Qualifications

Although the majority of top-ranking FFF officers are self-designated as such or appointed, certain standards - and expediencies - are observed in determining the governing hierarchy. It is prescribed that in order to become, and likewise remain, an official of the Federation the candidate must be of attested "good moral character" and must exhibit qualities of leadership.¹ Significantly, the scope of discretionary power implied in such a reservation is quite broad. Though this power theoretically resides with the selecting authority - generally the FFF President' - yet in actuality it is almost exclusively reserved to the national and local FFF priest-advisors who are judged to be the only qualified arbiters on questions of morality and personal abilities.

A further qualification which is' also open to ecclesiastical influence asserts that, although there is to be no discrimination on a religious basis, those who are openly "irreligious," confirmed atheists, communists, fascists, or who are connected in any way with the latter two groups, are barred from leadership posts. It has even been recently suggested by some in the upper FFF echelons that a system should be adopted whereby FFF leaders would receive MIS (Military Intelligence Service) clearance - a proposal which has received the hearty endorsement of Fr. Mauri.² However, it is unlikely that such a system would prove feasible in view of the generally conceded low caliber of MIS processing and the difficulty and expense' of checking individuals.³ There is another, more important restriction with regard to leadership posts which, in consonance with the Federation's

¹This proviso was given official endorsement during the May 1956 National Convention of leaders and officials. Also see Appendix II; FFF Constitution, Art. IX, Sec. 2.

²The MIS, an investigatory branch of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), is now an integral part of the intelligence division of the General Staff of the AFP. It reports on the "peace and order" conditions obtaining throughout the Islands as well as on the "security" of the nation both internal and external. Fr' Mauri, it should be noted, perhaps tends to overrate the strength and cunning of the Communists in the Philippines, basing his conjectures on his China experience. Hence he has communicated much of his concern to FFF officials which has consequently found its way into their policies as in this case.

³The suggestion was nevertheless inserted in the FFF Constitution. (See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Art. IX, Sec. 4.) The system has not, thus far, been fully established.

policy of political non-partisanship, states that no one holding a political office above and including the mayoral level can become an official of the Federation.¹

The National Officialdom in further defining its qualifications decreed that anyone of ability, character etc. could become a leader of the Federation even if "he himself or themselves are not farmers by profession." Nor is prior FFF membership a prerequisite, "but once a person becomes an official or leader he automatically becomes a member of the Federation."² These two clauses, reflecting the preponderance of lawyer-officials, were apparently inserted to ensure that this group's monopoly of offices could be maintained; and that no one would feel justified in challenging, on the basis of occupation, origin or experience in the movement, their right to rule. However, such an arbitrarily established precedent will hardly provide the incentives necessary to promote an upward movement of ambitious and talented peasant leaders through the ranks of the FFF. For a position at the apex is not necessarily earned by time-tested demonstrations of ability, loyalty or popular support.

On the national level, the FFF has had some difficulty both in selecting and retaining leaders despite the encouragement offered by the "back-to-the-barrio" campaign of the Magsaysay regime. One reason is financial.³ The problem of salaries is a crucial one, for the Federation is monetarily incapable of fully remunerating its officials. Many FFF leaders have thus been unable to devote their full time and energies to FFF activities while others have been forced to give up their work with the FFF entirely. In the majority of cases only those who receive outside financial aid (as from the Asia Foundation) or those with their own private sources of income could afford to work on the volunteer basis that is demanded by the FFF's financial state.

Another source of leadership instability is the great prestige value attached by Filipino society to professions such as law and medicine or to white-collar job and political offices; while, in contrast, any type of labor which might be considered manual is depreciated. Many qualified young men and women lack the "pioneering spirit" necessary for leadership in a mass agrarian movement centered in the barrios, or are unaware of the possibilities for future advancement in such activity. The Federation President ascribes this to the current system of education in the

¹ See pp. 12 and 13 for a fuller discussion of this restriction.

² Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive Council - National FFF Convention, May 1-4, 1956, pp. 1-2.

³ See pp. 22 and 23 for a discussion of FFF finances.

Philippines which he considers defective in that "it attempts to fit the youth to the top of the social pyramid...(and)...fails to inspire them to love and serve the ideals of the common people!"¹ And so, he concludes, "the educated young people, instead of using their acquired knowledge and skill to lead their community to social amelioration and progress, abandon the rural areas, thereby creating a dangerous vacuum of leadership!"² Under such conditions it is to the credit of the Federation (and to Montemayor's propaganda) that it has been able to draw into its movement as many young, and professionally qualified leaders as it has. But as to whether or not they will, in the long run, actually be able or willing to fill what Montemayor terms "a dangerous vacuum of leadership" in the rural Philippines is open to considerable speculation.

Although the Federation of Free Farmers aspires to be a peasants' organization, paradoxically the largest percentage of FFF officials, who participate in policy-making decisions within the Federation hierarchy, are lawyers and members of landed families. This group forms the core of the national officialdom. Indeed it could be said to constitute a type of "intellectual elite" which holds itself above the masses while professing to act in their best interests - interests predetermined by this elite. The predominance of lawyer-leaders is apt to influence greatly the character of the organization. Of a traditionally conservative and legalistic bent, their approach to the problems of the peasantry is likely to be a narrow and inhibited one. Identified by training (and no doubt by inclination) with the educated class which has largely disassociated itself from the masses, the FFF officials may prove incapable of providing the dynamic, imaginative type of leadership necessary to unify the peasantry in a militant mass movement without which no genuine alteration of the status quo can be affected. In fact, there is evidence of a tendency among the FFF ruling elite to divorce itself from the real base of support in the barrios - a trend which runs sharply counter to the fundamental principles of the organization! In the long run such leaders, by disposition, are liable to shift the basic orientation of the Federation from the local, agricultural sector towards the national, political arena!³

On the other hand, a leadership originating from the rooted in the barrio has presumably had a long and intimate association with the farmers - their mentality,

¹Sentinel, June 16, 1956 (Philippines Catholic Newsweek). As Hunt notes, the ratio of law students in the Philippines to the general population is 1 to 1,818 (U.S. 1 to 2,807) whereas that for agricultural students is 1 to 6,666 (U.S. 1 to 2,701). See Chester Hunt, Sociology in the Philippine Setting, p. 307.

²Jeremias Montemayor, "The Role of Farmers Organizations and the Role of Rural Youth in Underdeveloped Countries" (Guest lecture before "Second" International Rural Youth Conference, Beirut, Lebanon, August 27, 1957) p. 13.

³As one authority has observed, there is a similar trend general throughout the Philippines: "Because of the lack of authority to be exercised at the local level and because of the prevailing attitude that effective action must be national, those interested in reform and political action concentrate their efforts on national rather than local affairs...In the Philippines...there appears to be a noticeable drift of the educated...from the...rural areas to the larger urban centers. This is understandable in view of their personal ambitions and their desire to do something for their country, but it makes more difficult a solution of the problems of bridging the gap between the educated group and the rest of the population..." (See Willard H. Elsbree, "The Philippines," Representative Government in Southeast Asia, Rupert Emerson, ed., p. 112.

psychology, problems and needs. A peasant leadership, moreover, is most capable of winning their loyalty and arousing them to concerted action. It is, as well, strongly tied to the interests of the rural classes and can perhaps offer the only real guarantee that the goals for which the Federation was ostensibly created to achieve will be preserved.

Basic Aims and Principles

Democratic Revolution

The substance of the philosophy underlying the Free Farmers movement can be found in Montemayor's treatise, "The Filipino Farmer," which has remained to the present the basic handbook of the Federation. Moreover, the original Manifesto of the FFF and its 1956 Constitution are in large part derived from "The Filipino Farmer." It provides as well the content of FFF propaganda. In this lengthy article Montemayor has attempted to describe and define what a mass agrarian organization should be, both in spirit and in action; he has enunciated its policies and presented its structural outline as well.

The core of Montemayor's analysis of the dominant social, economic and political defect of the nation, is the self-evident fact of the Filipino farmers' poverty, and to this factor he ascribes the majority of the nation's problems. However, rectification can be assured, he states, through a simple formula - by making every tao the owner of a family-size farm. Such ownership is to be achieved "by settlement of public agricultural lands and by the expropriation and subdivision of big landed estates."¹ This then is the paramount objective of the Federation. It embodies, furthermore, a program of political action. In view of the individual farmer's economic and political helplessness and the control of national life exercised by landed interests there could be only one way to realize this objective in a manner truly beneficial to the masses. That, Montemayor concludes, is by "democratic revolution." In further clarification of this "revolutionary" principle he asserts:

All the tenants and small farmers in the Philippines must be united together and organized. Once they are united and organized, they shall acquire through democratic processes, overwhelming political power. Using this political power, they shall plan and apply such reforms in our economic, social and political life as will really promote the well-being and the interests of the majority of our people. . . . There are fourteen million farmers in the Philippines. If they are united and organized, there is nothing that they cannot do.

¹ Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 48. (Also see pp. 104-107 for evolution of this theory.)

As a pertinent footnote to this statement he adds - alluding to Luis Taruc - that "it took a Communist to make us realize that farmers, properly organized can be used as an effective force - for or against the government." Montemayor's conclusions cannot be said to be original, having been arrived at long before by various mass agrarian organizations! That their application to the agrarian problems of the peasantry will be in a different manner and of a wider scope than hitherto remains to be seen.

The Federation, in addition to its aims of mass unity and family-size farm ownership, aspires to fulfill six specific functions which were originally outlined by its President and later elaborated and approved during the 1956 convention of national leaders! The FFF is to function in the following ways: (1) as a weapon of common defense against "the oppression of landlords, the deceit of politicians and the domination of big businessmen," (2) as an instrument of peace between landlords and tenants; (3) as a bridge to bring the government and the people closer together; (4) as a voice for the majority in the government and particularly in the field of politics; (5) as a medium of information and education for the membership; and, (6) as a mechanism of self-help through cooperatives. More generally the Federation seeks: to promote democracy and freedom and to check communist infiltration; to promote in any way possible, the physical, material and spiritual well-being of its members; and, to promote understanding, cooperation, and coordination between the Federation and other groups in the Philippines and abroad.

The Federation of Free Farmers thus seeks to accomplish its goals, not through the violence of armed rebellion as its predecessors had attempted, but through peaceful, "democratic revolution."

Political Non-partisanship

A further aspect of the National Leadership's attitude as regards an agrarian movement is that of political non-partisanship.¹ Such a policy

¹In some respects, it might be said that this FFF policy emerged through a process of "trial and error." For in its beginning stages of FFF made a number of "political mistakes" which seemed to prove the advisability of political non-partisanship. One example which could be mentioned involved a former high-ranking official of the national Federation. During a FFF rally held in Lubao, Pampanga, the FFF official "indulged in attacking" the then Congressional representative from Pampanga, Diosdado Macapagal - now Philippine Vice-President. The meeting was marked by a heated discussion during which the FFF official found himself in a lone, uncomfortable position, the FFF members and other leaders taking the side of Congressman Macapagal. The antagonism of the crowd was great enough to warrant a public apology by the Pampanga FFF President for the unsubstantiated allegations vocalized by the FFF official. When similar situations occurred and the Magsaysay administration was even severely criticized, the FFF official was "removed", by Montemayor with the consent of the FFF hierarchy. (Letter from Pampanga FFF President to Montemayor, Nov. 2, 1954)! Officials still attack faults of the Government, though they have never referred to Magsaysay. They rarely come out against an individual politico on a partisan basis.

reflects the belief that the interests of the membership could best be served, for the present at any rate, and the unity of the movement maintained only if the Federation were to "stay out of politics." This does not, however, restrict the FFF from engaging in pressure group activities. In pursuance of this aim, all officials of the FFF, except in "rare and exceptional cases," are prohibited from running for any elective government office above the rank of a city or barrio councilorship. In addition, any officer is automatically dismissed if he received an appointment to a government office. Nor will reinstatement be granted until one year after defeat or until the termination of the governmental office.¹ This axiom has been deemed of such importance that it is now embodied in the 1957 Constitution.²

The above stipulation was recently applied in the case of Victoriano David - member of the FFF's National Policy Board and Legal Counsel of its Pampanga Chapter. Inasmuch as David decided to run in 1957 for Congressman of the First District of Pampanga, he was therefore obliged to submit his formal resignation to the National body. This group then felt it wise to issue an explanatory circular letter so as to allay any doubts or suspicions which FFF members might entertain upon hearing of David's candidacy. The following excerpt from the circular, more fully expounds the Federation's stand on political participation:

Officials, leaders and members of the Federation are still citizens of the Philippines, and as such, they have the freedom and the right under the Constitution and laws of our country to engage in partisan politics, to campaign for any political party and to vote for and campaign for any candidate of their choice. But they do so in their personal capacity and not in behalf of, or in the name of, the Federation of Free Farmers. No one is authorized to use the name of the Federation for partisan political purposes. Anyone who attempts to do this, does it without authority and in violation of the constitution and policies of the FFF.³

Furthermore, although the Federation is avowedly non-partisan (except on rare occasions) it is conceivable, as admitted by its leaders, that eventually the FFF might reconstitute itself as a farmer political party should it consider this to be the only way of attaining its stated objective

¹These three rules were adopted during the National Convention of leaders and officials in May 1956, attended by the writer.

²See Appendix II; FFF Constitution, Art. IX, Sec. 5. Before this ruling went into effect, the FFF found itself in a difficult position with regard to its Chapter in Santa Barbara, Pangasinan. The FFF Legal Counsel for Santa Barbara FFF had become the town Mayor as well. The two offices proved to be incompatible for events indicated that the Mayor was using the Federation for questionable political purposes. When the National FFF became aware of the situation, the Mayor was removed from his post as legal counsel but not before serious doubts had been aroused concerning the non-partisanship of the FFF.

³Excerpt from a circular issued to the FFF membership, May 31, 1957. David, it might be noted, lost in the election.

of rural amelioration; and then only after all other means had been exhausted.¹ Such a metamorphosis is, however, a decidedly remote possibility judging by the current sentiment of the Leadership. Only a radical change of circumstances could alter its present stand for the Federation is now poorly equipped to carry on any type of political warfare.

However, political non-partisanship, it might be noted, has not always been so rigidly enforced! For the Federation, acting as a body, has on occasion found it both politic and wise to take a partisan position. Illustrative of this was the Federation's stand during the Recto-Magsaysay controversy over foreign policy in 1955.² A circular letter³ was issued on August 4, 1955 by the then National Executive Council of the FFF which stated:

The National Executive Council, reflecting what it deems to be the mind of all our members, has just adopted a resolution supporting President Ramon Magsaysay in his controversy with Senator Claro Recto. It would be a good idea for all our provincial, municipal and barrio units to adopt similar resolutions and send said resolutions to the National Office for personal transmittal to President Magsaysay...³

The FFF was rewarded for its partisanship in this instance by a telegram from RM dated August 12, 1955 in which he expressed: "Sincerest thanks for endorsing my stand against Senator Recto. I asked you to join me in keeping faith with our people and in looking after our country's best interests! Let us keep our ground and warmest regards." No attempt at that time or since has been made to reconcile this opportunistic move with the FFF's principle of non-partisanship in political affairs!⁴ However, no other similar incident has occurred.

¹Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor and other FFF officials, January 3, 1956, personal interviews.

²Senator Claro Rector was then strongly denouncing the Philippine President as an "American puppet." See Philippines Free Press, July 30, 1955 which also mentioned the fact that Recto (the loyal opposition) had opposed RM no less than 32 times since he assumed office. The 1955 controversy became a heatedly personal one and widely publicized in the press.

³FFF Circular Letter No. 3, To All Leaders, August 4, 1955. In accordance with this request many FFF units issued resolutions, fully signed by their members, which expressed their "solid and unqualified support to RM in his administrative policy." In effect it was a FFF statement of allegiance to the President!

⁴The best explanation is perhaps the following. Tony Diaz, nephew of the President and formerly an FFF national executive officer, urged the FFF to follow this course in order to "please the President" and hence strengthen its own position in Malacanang. (Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor, May 22, 1956, personal interview.) Judging that they had nothing to lose by such a move, the national FFF officers went to RM with the formal resolution.

Catholicism

As an organization that is Catholic both in inspiration and in principle, the Free Farmers union, like its industrial counterpart the Federation of Free Workers, is concerned not only with matters of a political and economic nature, but it purports as well to foster the "spiritual well-being" of its membership defined in terms of Catholicism. Theoretically, the "spiritual" aspect of the Federation's work will only attain real significance, the leaders explain, when its other aims have been fulfilled.¹ But in effect the "spiritual significance" of the Free Farmers movement is to aid the Catholic Church as a lay movement in its so-called Apostolic Mission. Consequently, the religious and secular spheres are not definitively separated. For as Montemayor put it: "In order to infuse the Catholic way of life in a practical manner Catholic action must permeate the lives of the masses in the very process of solving their vital and pressing problems."² To this end the organization, since its founding, has enlisted the services of numerous parish priests throughout the provinces. These clergymen serve as so-called FFF chaplains and advisors, though their authority does not extend to the policy-making level. As a rule, they must first secure authorization from the Philippine Catholic Hierarchy or their immediate superiors before participating in the Free Farmers movement and must remain under the Church's exclusive jurisdiction. They are nonetheless to coordinate their plans and work with Fr. Mauri, National Chaplain and Advisor of the FFF.

Although the priest's position within the Federation is not defined in the FFF Constitution, Montemayor, as prime advocate of the FFF's Catholic role, has specified in official declarations the scope and character of the priest's responsibilities and duties in the movement. These statements have now been accepted by the FFF Leadership.³ As FFF Chaplain the priest is to minister to the "spiritual needs" of both the members and leaders of the FFF and is supposedly the ultimate moral guide for all their actions. Accordingly, he is to

1. As the FFF states: "We cannot just tell a hungry man to pray the Rosary and be pious thereafter. We must first help him raise sufficient food and income for himself and his family and then tell him to bend his knees in thanksgiving for God's bounty. In this way religion will have a touch of reality and prayer, of practicality." (Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 40. The concluding section of this treatise is mainly an exposition of the "Spiritual Significance of the Federation of Free Farmers.")

2. Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 49 (italics added)

3. See Appendix III: Jeremias Montemayor, The Role of the Priest in the Federation of Free Farmers, (Mimeographed sheet for distribution to FFF members issued by the FFF, 1955)

maintain a direct and continuing contact with the barrio inhabitants. This, the FFF Leadership presumes, will help to restore the faith of the masses in the priest and therefore in the Catholic Church. For in the past they have largely been neglected by their town-residing ecclesiastics and have come to associate the priest with the landed and professional classes.¹ In turn, the presence of the FFF priest among the peasants is calculated to serve as a convincing token of the organization's basic intentions towards them.² The priest is, in many instances, the Federation's most potent propaganda. Too, while fulfilling his religious duties among the FFF members, the clergyman also acts as a "safeguard against corruption among the local ranks" of the organization as well as against

1. "The people in the barrios," Montemayor states, "do not know the priest. He appears as unapproachable as the landlord or the governor. In fact, he is known as the friend of the landlords and of the influential people." (Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 54). However, as Montemayor has alleged in one of his more unequivocal statements: "If you look at the enemies of our faith (from the Protestants and the Witnesses of Jehovah to the Communists) you will...notice that...in promoting their mistaken or evil ends...they are using the 'grass roots' method - a technique of conversion and leadership... (Hence) it is high time we (Catholics) awake from our lethargy... (and) go back to the barrio." (Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, pp. 52-53.) This statement is contained in the concluding section of "The Filipino Farmer" entitled "The Spiritual Significance of the Federation of Free Farmers." However, because this section - generally uncompromising in its tenor and wholly impolitic in its implications - has occasioned some antagonism and doubts among non-Catholic FFF associates as well as among the FFF officials, it has been deleted from the body of the work and no longer appears for publication and distribution. This is not necessarily to conclude, however, that its author, bowing to expediency, has thereby altered his basic opinions or beliefs. For various policies pertaining to the role of the priest have found their way into other FFF official publications; and, though couched in more diplomatic phraseology, they are essentially derived from "The Filipino Farmer."

2. As described in Montemayor's work: "In all the barrios where the priests appear for the first time with Federation labor leaders the people were surprised, for they never expected nor imagined that priests should be interested in labor questions and in their material problems. But soon their surprise disappeared and in its place grew friendship with the...robed advisers and confidence in the Free Farmers movement." (Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 55 (italics added).) The role of the priest in the unionising activities of the FFF is more fully discussed on ppi 48-49.)

Communist infiltration.¹ He is likewise sanctioned to act as counselor in the selection of local leaders - his personal recommendation usually being the decisive factor. And he assumes at least nominal supervision, if not always careful surveillance, of their performance as FFF officials. He is, as it were, the special appointive and investigatory arm of the National FFF Leadership.

On the whole the religious and temporal aspects of the Federation's work are so united in the functions of the priest as to often make them indistinguishable. For the priest is also encouraged to take an active part in FFF secular activities and often does, Fr. Mauri being one example. In his official capacity as FFF adviser he is to "guide and counsel" FFF members and officials in such subjects as organization, economic projects like cooperatives, farm management etc., and leadership training in rural areas which would include catechetical as well as practical instruction. The priest can also proffer advice pertaining to political policies when they "specially involve important moral principles"² But no further specification has yet been given as to who would determine when such principles were involved or by what criteria.

The engagement of Catholic priests in the Free Farmers movement has, however, engendered widespread confusion and speculation, among both the local FFF leaders and the rank and file, as to the religious exclusiveness of the organization. Therefore, the FFF found it necessary to clarify its Catholicism during the 1956 National Convention of leaders. At that time

1. Letter from Montemayor to Fr. Guanlao of the Tarlac Parish, June 16, 1955. Corruption, as it is used here, presumably means any action which might jeopardize the reputation or goals of the Federation in terms of its ethical or moral implications.

2. See Appendix III: Montemayor, The Role of the Priest in the Federation of Free Farmers. This policy is also found in: The Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive Council - National FFF Convention, May 1-4, 1956 (attended by writer), p. 5.

there was considerable controversy¹ as to whether or not the appellation Catholic should be used at all in formally describing the Free Farmers movement with, notably, Montemayor taking a stand for such classification and Esquerra dissenting. The debate ended somewhat abruptly, however, when Fri Mauri intervened in his "advisory capacity" to reinforce Montemayor's position. As a result the majority of voting FFF officials who had resolutely supported Esquerra abandoned their original stand, deferring instead to Fri Mauri and Montemayor.² The following statement of policy, based on a proposal by Fri Mauri, was then issued:

The Federation of Free Farmers is a Catholic organization in the sense that it is inspired by Catholic principles and ideals, and that its chaplains and national advisers are exclusively Catholic priests and religious;

1. Some leaders argued pragmatically that such a designation was a "tactical error." For it could easily be misconstrued, as it had been by many, as discriminatory against non-Catholics and hence a factor inhibiting the growth of the movement. A few frankly expressed their disapproval of the officialized religious functions of the Federation which, they averred, were too much in the nature of proselytism. Such sectarian activities, it was felt, should be a matter of private choice among the constituent units of the Federation rather than a program publicly sanctioned by the organization. The FFF, it was asserted, should remain a non-sectarian movement limited to the pursuance of purely "material" goals. No one, however, openly contested the desirability of enlisting the aid of the priest as an advisor in practical matters such as cooperatives and, perhaps of more importance to the majority, as a propagandist in capturing the confidence and allegiance of the peasantry. But it was likewise strongly inferred (though not expressly stated) that his apostolic work should not be carried on under the aegis of the Federation. (Based on observations and notes made by the writer during the Meeting of the National Executive Council, May 3, 1956, as well as from informal talks with various of the leaders present.) It should be noted that Montemayor, anxious to win approval and perhaps financial assistance from the Catholic Hierarchy, could hardly have taken any other stand as he might have found himself in an extremely embarrassing position. For he has repeatedly endorsed the FFF to Catholic ecclesiastics as the "first Catholic national peasant movement in the history of our country" which because of its Catholic color and avowed motivation has greatly increased the prestige of the Catholic Church among the peasantry. (Letter from Montemayor to Rufino Santos, D. D. Archbishop of Manila, January 12, 1955)

2. For a discussion of the decision-making process in the FFF see p. 30-31..

yet it is not Catholic in the sense that it does not discriminate against nor exclude members of other religions¹

Thus far, the FFF in practice has made no distinction between Catholic and non-Catholic either in extending material benefits and aid to its membership or in any other of its secular activities

Another question related to that of religious exclusiveness, but demanding a more definitive answer than the former received, arose during a later meeting of the FFF officialdom. The omnipresence of the Catholic clergymen in all branches of FFF affairs plus the close association of the organization, through its President, with both the Catholic Social Action movement and the Philippine Catholic Hierarchy² have given a decidedly partisan complexion to most FFF activities despite official pronouncements to the contrary. So much so that many have concluded that the FFF is in reality a Church sponsored and, therefore, controlled movement. The danger of Church control as argued by some, and with justification, rests in the fact that the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines - a large landholding,³ and landlord supported institution - is little imbued with a progressive attitude towards land reform. It is far too prone to disapprove of, or nullify if it can, any thorough-going attempts at altering the present tenancy system, labeling, more often than not, such efforts as either communistic or radical in motivation. And in this it apes its political contemporaries. Moreover, the Church in a nominally Catholic country is one of the most dominant and influential factors in Philippine national life - in economic and political spheres as well as in the religious and educational. Therefore it could, with relative impunity, permanently impede an agrarian

1. Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive Council - National FFF Convention, May 1-4, 1956, p. 4. The phrasing of the statement, it might be noted, is sufficiently ambiguous so as not to inhibit the Federation from engaging in Catholic activities in whatever manner its Leadership deems expedient.

2. Montemayor claims that "the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines has officially endorsed the Free Farmers movement, having pledged its moral and spiritual support. With this the Federation knows no fear and is sure of success." (Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 56). This is, however, unconfirmed. The FFF also recently received a personal letter of commendation from the late Pope Pius XII which fortified the FFF's position in the eyes of the Church as well as the membership.

3. As one authority states: "Indications are that the Catholic Church has retained control of large blocks of urban and rural land and may even be increasing its holdings." See J. E. Spencer, Land and People in the Philippines, p. 145.

movement such as the Free Farmers with its professed aims of "radical" reform.¹

But in answer to its critics the FFF, while avowedly espousing Catholicism, considered it wise to define its position vis-a-vis the Catholic Church in the following declaration of independence:

Neither the priest nor the Catholic Church shall control the Federation. The Federation shall be operated, directed, and controlled exclusively by laymen. Priest advisers are limited to the giving of advice and suggestions.²

On the surface, this would seem reasonable insurance against Church control of the movement. Certainly the Leadership, though courting the favor and approval of the Hierarchy as the most politic course,³ now appears to oppose any such clerical usurpation from without. Too, the Federation, insofar as it receives financial sustenance from the Church, is hardly fettered thereby. For, excepting a donation from the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, only the Archbishop of Manila has contributed anything approaching substantial aid; he has donated some 500 pesos per month and then only intermittently. There have been, furthermore, numerous instances when the Church has not "formally" permitted its clergy to participate in the movement. It has tended on the whole to be rather

1. The Federation has on a few occasions found itself in opposition to the Hierarchy where the vested interests of the Church have been threatened or particularly when the Church has supported its wealthy, landlord benefactors.

2. The Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive Council - National FFF Convention, May 1-4, 1956, p. 5.

3. The FFF is well aware of the great power of the Church to hinder the progress of the Free Farmers movement. One example of what may occur can be cited. In 1956, the FFW led a strike in the University of Sto. Tomas controlled by the Dominicans - an order which, according to many, has often been in rivalry with the Society of Jesus. The strike raised a storm of protest from spokesmen of the Catholic Hierarchy. When a deadlock over solution to the strike resulted, the issue was referred to the Pope. Nonetheless, the FFW together with its advisor, Fr. Hogan, fell into rather serious disfavor with the Hierarchy. It is thought that Fr. Hogan, whose activities have already been considerably curtailed, may be recalled to the U.S. (Information obtained from Jesuit Director in the Catholic Welfare Organization, Washington D.C.; September 5, 1957, personal interview.) How serious the FFW's disagreement with the Hierarchy has jeopardized the future and vitality of the organization is still open to speculation. Undoubtedly it has inhibited the leadership, causing them to take a more cautious and conservative approach to trade-unionism.

restrictive in its dealings with the Federation in the past. However, now that the Federation appears far more frequently in the public limelight and has ostensibly shown promise of becoming a force in its own right, the Hierarchy has grown noticeably more attentive. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the Church will seek with renewed effort to draw the FFF within its orbit in anticipation of the time that it might possibly have to deal with a powerful and aggressive agrarian union of Catholic orientation.

Membership

Membership in the Federation of Free Farmers is limited to those small landowners who till the land themselves and to agricultural tenants; landlords are thereby excluded. However, this condition does not, as mentioned above, apply to leaders or officials of the FFF. The FFF policy-making body, in its 1956 meeting, further extended this delimitation to include: independent saltmakers, poultry and livestock raisers under employment; fishpond laborers and persons engaged in fishing; and, landless persons who qualify as prospective farmers. The concept of agricultural tenants, in addition, was broadened so as to embrace agricultural laborers of plantations or in sugar centrals including "sacadas." Members or laborers who are employees as such will, as stipulated, occupy a distinct place in the organizational structure. Too, should the need arise, as in the case of special registration with the Department of Labor, farm laborers will be counted doubly: as members of the national organization and as members of the local union. Disqualified from membership are any who have tenants and employees in connection with any agricultural or fishing enterprise.²

Furthermore, it was decreed that any member of the Free Farmers can be suspended or expelled, but only "in accordance with procedure to be determined by the Municipal or Central Chapter concerned."³ However, he can appeal through his provincial association to the National Executive Office which has the final authority. There have been few instances of such an expulsion.

1. Sacadas are migratory contract laborers recruited in the provinces of Antique, Capiz and Iloilo for work in the sugar plantations of Negros Occidental. They are one of the most exploited of labor groups in the Philippines. See Philippine Department of Labor, Special Report on Employment of Migrant Labor in the Sugar Industry in Negros Occidental.

2. Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive Council - National FFF Convention, May 1-4, 1956, pc 1. Also see Appendix I: FFF Constitution, Art. III, Seca 1.

3. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Art. III, Secc 3.

Procedure of Affiliation

The prospective FFF member usually applies, individually and through his local leadership, to the National Executive Office for an application in the form of a questionnaire. If it is approved (as it usually is) he is then issued, by the Manila office, an identification card certifying his FFF membership; the card costs him one peso.¹ Thereafter, he is expected to pay annual dues of 3 pesos 60 centavos, the custody of which rests with the National Treasurer; the National Executive likewise decides on the manner of disposing of the funds collected.² This expectation, however, is rarely fulfilled and the FFF, which should be standing on its feet financially, is often on the verge of bankruptcy. Only the monthly subsidy of some 2,000 pesos donated by the Asia Foundation under contractual agreement has sustained the organization; but the FFF is never able to wholly fill its operational needs estimated at 6,000 pesos per month.³ Though the stamp system, patterned after that used by American labor unions, has been recently adopted upon the suggestion of Esguerra, it has so far received only very limited use.

The reasons for such lax collection of dues are not difficult to discern. Some are reasons advanced by the leaders themselves. The farmer is still considerably suspicious of those who wish to exact money from him on promise of future help, having been in the past too frequently the dupe of racketeers and pseudo-labor leaders. Too, his impoverished condition renders him unable to pay though often he may be willing. There are, as well, problems of educating the farmer in responsible unionism which the Federation has been slow to appreciate. One of these was highlighted by an objection to paying membership fees raised by one FFF farmer which was based on the false assumption that "unions never collect dues" - or so he thought. The policy of the FFF leaders, moreover, is not one of strict enforcement for they believe, largely because of expediency, that the organization must act before it asks; it must first

1. It was originally 30 centavos, but with the introduction of the stamp system it has been raised to one peso. Even the FFF has its inflationary problems!

2. These funds, when they are collected, usually go towards maintenance of the national and provincial offices. They are disbursed as the need arises; there is no fixed allocation. However, in line with this all provincial budgets must be approved by the National Executive Office. See Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Annual Conference of the National Policy Board, October 19-22, 1957, p. 3

3. The FFF plans to supplement this by engaging in business and economic enterprises "in order that it may not always depend as it does now, solely on donations." (Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Annual Conference of the National Policy Board, October 19-22, 1957, p. 3.)

convince the tao of its reliability and integrity and give him some material proof of the advantages of FFF membership. Therefore, once a farmer has become an FFF affiliate, he is entitled to all the benefits which the organization is able, or sees fit, to provide regardless of whether or not he is a dues-paying member. This supposedly ensures his continuing allegiance to the movement as well.

But there is, consequently, a possibility that the rank and file of the Free Farmers will become so accustomed to "handouts" from Manila (as they are with the government), without a corresponding responsibility on their part, that it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to later exact full payment of fees. Yet this is an eventuality that the Federation has taken little concrete or forcible steps to meet.

Status as a Union

The Federation of Free Farmers, though an agrarian counterpart of the FFW, retains certain features which distinguish it from the ordinary trade-union. It defines itself as a union in the sense that it seeks the unity of the workers i.e. the tiller, and it depends for its strength on collective action. However with respect to tenants and small farmers, the usual employer-employee relationship is inapplicable; the case of agricultural laborers may vary depending on the conditions of their employment and the terms of their contract. Moreover, although mediation is exercised in disputes between landlords and tenants, yet the Federation often speaks for only a few members for a single tenant. Nor has the FFF yet resorted to the strike. For it has sought solution to agrarian conflicts only through the courts where FFF members have generally been able to attain what they demand - or so the leaders allege. However, no doubt one major reason why the strike has not been used is the difficulty of mobilizing tenant-farmers in order to take such action. Equally important is the problem of funds to sustain them through the strike period, as well as the probability of ejection or loss of land rights and, therefore, further recourse to the courts. Moreover, in congested areas such as Central Luzon, the landlord can readily find farmers to work the land, thereby replacing the strikers; to oversee large tracts of land so as to keep out these "scabs" would indeed be difficult though not impossible with sufficient, experienced leaders. The national officers do admit that they lack the organizational ability and financial reserves necessary to make a strike either feasible or practicable. But they will use it, they contend, given the right conditions and the necessity.² However, under the present circumstances

1. It must be noted, however, that the Department of Labor by loose construction of the law, has already so construed labor unions as to include agrarian groups.

2. Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor, April 17, 1956, personal interview.

it is most probable that litigation rather than the strike will continue to be the ruler

Furthermore, elections have never been held, either on a national scale or on the provincial level, to determine who shall be the duly constituted representatives of the FFF. This, plus the fact that until recently no constitution had been drawn up, prohibited the organization from registering with the Department of Labor and hence obtaining a legalized status. However, ultimately the Federation was forced to attain legitimacy for pressures from various quarters demanded its accomplishment. One of these seems to have been the influence of the Asia Foundation on which the FFF almost entirely depends for the financing of its operations. For any organization which the Foundation supports should have, as a matter of policy, at least the trappings of a democratic group. Another has stemmed from the insistence of FFF provincial officials as well as members; it appears that the non-registered status of the FFF greatly hindered organizational work and other activities. For example, some local government officials have forbidden FFF meetings within their jurisdictions and have justified such ultimatums by arguing that FFF leaders were unable to produce a constitution or any evidence of registration. Such reasoning has, in fact, provided many FFF opponents with effective propaganda against the organization.

But the leaders very reluctantly accepted the necessity of what they term "technical legality." They point to the situation which obtained during the incumbency of Primitivo Lovina, former Secretary of Labor under the Quirino administration; the Secretary, they assert, was able to control and dictate to labor unions through the registration process— an allegation not without some basis in fact. There have been similar occurrences under other administrators.¹ Too, they contend, if the FFF were to find itself in opposition to certain Department of Labor theories or for other reasons had its permit revoked, the farmers would have cause to distrust the organization.²

Nonetheless, the immediate advantages to be gained out-

1. A Senate Blue Ribbon Committee investigation in 1952, for instance, revealed that "if a union was not in the good graces of the Secretary of Labor, its permit was either suspended or cancelled without any hearing or without "due process of law." (Rodolfo Tupas, "Comments on the Magna Charta of Labor," Philippine Studies, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 1954.)

2. Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor, April 17, 1956, personal interview. However now, though the Department of Labor can still suspend or cancel a union's permit, a hearing is required. And the union can appeal its case to the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court if, after the hearing, the Department still refuses it a permit. (Rodolfo Tupas, "Comments on the Magna Charta of Labor," Philippine Studies, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 1954.)

weighed future uncertainties and the FFF, as a matter of expediency, finally registered in August of 1957 by submitting its Constitution and certifying to the election of its national officials.^d However, there are two important considerations relating to this procedure. Firstly, the election of the national officers which qualified the FFF to become a legal union was hardly one in the ordinary sense. A National Policy Board of some twelve or less members selected the officials; no general election among the Federation membership was held. The rationale for this centers on what the FFF leaders fear to be the ever present danger of Communist infiltration into leadership positions should general elections be called.² And this has been repeatedly stressed in official pronouncements.^c In unofficial statements - to the Catholic Hierarchy in particular - this has been slightly reinterpreted as a measure designed to insure the retention of power in the national sphere by "a group of trusted Catholics."³

A further, but scarcely tenable, rationalization for power exclusiveness has been advanced by the FFF Leadership. They affirm that for the sake of efficiency in operation, elections must be delayed; the membership is not only unlettered and untrained in the processes of self-governance, but is as well incapable of independent decision-making. Full democratic procedures in the internal organization, as a whole, are thereby precluded for the present and, if the above arguments are any indication indefinitely. Yet the leaders have, in one sense,

1. The FFF is as well registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission thereby acquiring a legal personality for financial reasons.

2. There was a venture, however, in Tarlac. There an election which was to be held for provincial officials was subtly called off by the National Leadership as the people were about to put into office a man who, though acknowledged to be a Communist, had nonetheless ingratiated himself with the populace. The Leadership's obsession with Communist infiltration very likely reflects Fr. Mauri's influence. For, as previously mentioned, the FFF National Adviser has placed great stress on the cleverness of Communist tactics in wresting the leadership of agrarian movements.

3. As it was explained to the Hierarchy: "For security reasons, particularly along the lines of Communist infiltration, we cannot allow all our units to elect their own officers and we would like to continue for sometime entrusting supreme power in a group of trusted Catholics at the top of the organization." (Letter from Montemayor to Archbishop Rufino Santos, December 12, 1955.) Montemayor further states: "We have no doubt that (you) would like us Catholics to dominate the field. We even think that, if possible, we should leave no room for any other leader so that we could win all the farmers of the country to our faith and way of life." (Letter from Montemayor to the Auxiliary Bishop of Manila, June 22, 1954.)

involved themselves in a contradiction. For while denying elections, they still contend that "a farmers' organization is necessary to put democracy into action in the Philippines" - democracy being defined as the rule of the majority. "This is the whole basis of democracy wherein the people themselves must rule themselves, must uplift themselves, must shape their own destiny."¹ FFF officials, apparently uncertain of the wholehearted support of the peasantry in an election, have avoided putting their leadership to the test and have sought vindication of their rule on other grounds.² Secondly, the Constitution was, in the main, drafted by the FFF President and submitted to the Department of Labor without convoking a constitutional convention of all members to ratify the document in full as had been previously envisioned.³ Rather the Constitution became effective as of November 17, 1956, when it was nominally approved by nine out of the thirteen voting members of the National Policy Board, meeting the constitutional requirement of a two-thirds affirmative vote.⁴ However, out of the nine, one - Antonio Diaz⁵ - has long been an inactive member of the NPB and another has since withdrawn; a third usually votes in absentee, conferring his proxy on the FFF President. It is thus "stretching it" somewhat to claim that a two-thirds affirmative vote was received.

The leaders, though, have been long opposed to the drafting

1. Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, ppi 15, 30.

2. When the FFF was first making a bid for the leadership of the peasantry and had not firmly established itself in any of the barrios this uncertainty was thus phrased: "We fear that ambitious politicians, communists or racketeers, or non-Catholic religious leaders may, in the near future, get the backing and support we lack and seize the initiative and leadership from us." (Letter from Montemayor to the Auxiliary Bishop of Manila, June 25, 1954.)

3. The Constitution in large part is a reproduction of the resolutions - most of which were proposed by Montemayor or patterned after his "Filipino Farmer" - adopted by the May 1956 meeting of the National Executive Council.

4. The other four members did not vote apparently because they were absent when and if such voting did formally occur.

5. Antonio Diaz, nephew of the late President Magsaysay, resigned as Third Vice-President in the early days of the Federation, but still retains the title of board member though he never participates in the deliberations of the national body. It was RM who advised him to secure a job with the FFF and though he once tried to use the FFF for political purposes, its leadership no doubt feels it politic to retain him - in name if not in actuality. Hence his name can be found affixed to the majority of official FFF documents.

of a constitution until such time as they think the organization has matured sufficiently enough to formulate a comprehensive, meaningful document. Because, they believe, a constitution does not and cannot create an organization; rather it must be a mirror through which the organization sees itself and "the FFF must first have a face."¹ Men and circumstances, it is reasoned, bring into being a constitution; it embodies the response of leaders to existing needs and exigencies. In addition, the FFF feels that it must have a very wide margin of flexibility in which to act as it is a young, growing and still inexperienced movement without a guiding precedent. The Constitution, drawn up in November of 1956 as a result of external pressures, did not reflect the majority of the FFF members or officials. Thus it seems unlikely that such a document is apt to remain a permanent statement of policy. Any future document, however, will no doubt follow in spirit, if not in detail, the original.

Structure

National

National Executive Council

From its inception, the Federation of Free Farmers nominally functioned under the directorship of a central policy-determining body, the National Executive Council, which became inoperative in 1955 by the mutual assent of its members and finally abolished in 1956. The membership of the NEC was wholly self-appointed, the various councilorships being filled by common agreement among the leaders and based upon "seniority, intelligence, and experience brought about by the responsibility and efficiency of work with the Federation."² NEC meetings held in Manila, were largely informal; decisions were made verbally, without an official vote and no fixed procedure was followed. Though the Council was to be composed of 13 members, it never numbered more than eight or nine at any one time, with Montemayor and Esguerra as self-designated Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively. The other members were those who had originally been Esguerra's co-workers in the Federation of Free Workers as well as personal acquaintances of Montemayor

1. Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor, April 27, 1956, personal interview

2. Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive Council, November 1953

whom he had persuaded to assume leadership posts. On the Council as National Advisor was Fri Pacifico Ortiz, S. J.¹

The membership of the NEC was, however, never completely stable. For example, the First Vice-President, Federico Moreno, found himself too occupied as a lawyer and newspaper columnist to continue his duties in the Federation. Likewise, Antonio Diaz held the position of Third Vice-President for only a short time. Another, the Executive Secretary of the NEC, Pablo Benifacio, was asked by the President to resign because of what the Leadership considered to be his unreliability. Following a resignation, the post often remained vacant until someone else could be found to fill it, the responsibilities of the office usually being assumed by the other leaders during the interim. Or it might be abolished for all practical purposes.² Little effort was, however, made to keep a strict demarcation between offices in the NEC with their attending functions and powers. The Presidency was the only exception for few encroachments on its powers were allowed.

Administration was to be carried out through ten departments which have since then been enlarged in scope. However, several of these departments remained embryonic and the majority were not in full operation. Theoretically all department heads were to be appointees of the NEC which was only to supervise their activities. But due to the lack of trained recruits and the infancy of the organization, the NEC, by and large, actually performed these departmental duties thus enacting its own measures and executing them as well. There was, however, no prescribed method for handling the practical work of the organization; it was mainly by "rule of thumb." NEC members, having no regular or specialized administrative assignments, merely attended to FFF affairs when they were able and in whatever manner they thought fit.

The first meeting of the National Executive Council was held in November of 1953 at which time the policies of the National Federation, in lieu of a formal, written constitution,

1. Fri Ortiz remained advisor to the FFF until 1955 when he became Chaplain of the University of the Philippines. Fri Mauri arrived during this year to assume his advisorship on a full time basis. However, inasmuch as Fr. Ortiz had numerous other ecclesiastical duties assigned him, he was unable to devote much of his efforts to the Federation. He was nonetheless an important link between the FFF and the Catholic Hierarchy and reflected the opinions of the latter to a far greater extent than Fri Mauri has since done. Other Jesuits from the Institute of Social Order were asked to participate as FFF advisors but they were, on the whole, inactive as previously noted.

2. The position of Third Vice-President is a case in point; nominally it still exists as an honorary office, but in actuality it does not function.

were declared. It was determined by the founders of the FFF that the NEC should meet whenever necessary for the purpose of establishing policies to be national in scope and binding on all subordinate FFF units. The leaders of these local associations were usually selected by the NEC on the basis of "personal knowledge, trust and competence"¹ and their prerogatives were limited to making suggestions to the Council for the formulation or amendment of policies. The position of Fr. Ortiz was likewise defined; he was to act as counsel to the executive with no powers beyond this. The NEC also issued at this time a Preamble and Declaration of Purpose and it approved the FFF Manifesto - the organization's first document enunciating its general aims and principles.²

In practice, the NEC as a body met very rarely - three times to be exact.³ During the interregna a small group of influential leaders within the NEC, of whom Montemayor and Esguerra were most prominent, wielded the sole power of the Federation and were accountable for all decisions affecting the FFF on both a national and local level. These decisions were often arrived at unilaterally, the assumption being that other FFF officials would be in concurrence and, if not, they were free to dissent.⁴ This is a practice which has in large measure continued. Such official policy as did emerge during this early period was formulated, not on the basis of established precedents, but only in response to the needs of the organization within any particular set of circumstances, though within the framework of the Federation's general principles. It was laid down either verbally or through circulars and letters - a procedure which has not appreciably altered.

National Policy Board

The third and final meeting of the National Executive Council in May of 1956, attended by the majority of its members with other FFF leaders present, saw this body's formal dissolution. In its stead were created the National Policy Board - theoretically the sole decision-making organ of the Federation, and the National Executive Office - the administrative arm of the NPB. The national organization thereby acquired, in effect, a far more concrete and detailed form than hitherto.

1. Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 21.

2. See Appendix I: FFF Manifesto of the Federation of Free Farmers, October 25, 1953.

3. The second meeting which was held in 1954 did not concern itself with policy-making, but was centered on discussion of a Master Tenancy Contract then being drawn up in Tarlac, March-May 1954.

4. Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor and other FFF officials; personal interviews.

The National Policy Board, as decreed by the May 1956 Convention and subsequently expressed in the FFF Constitution, is the "highest policy-forming body of the Federation of Free Farmers." As inheritor of the NEC's powers, its principal function is "the formulation of national policies for the Federationi"¹ Those named as Board members were: Jeremias Montemayor - Chairman; Fernando Esguerra - Vice-Chairman; Reynaldo Alcantara - Secretary; Fri Hector Mauri, S. J. - Adviser; and, other members including Tirso Castro, Jri, Thelmo Escalona, Segundo Gonzales, and Antonio Abibuag. The composition of the Board has, with the notable exception of Esguerra, remained on the whole unaltered.

It is pertinent to note that at the time of the convention there were fourteen members. However, Fr. Mauri as Advisor does not have a vote (though his personal influence is not to be discounted) and out of the remaining thirteen, at least three others are now incapacitated, as previously noted, and one formally expelled. So that for all practical purposes, those on the National Policy Board who can actually wield decision-making power, so far as voting on specific issues is concerned, number eight or nine at the most.² However, in practice the power to determine policy may be, and usually is, even more concentrated. For Montemayor, as Chairman of the NPB, generally initiates policy; indeed he is the primary fount of those enactments governing both the national and the local spheres. The NPB as a consequence often confines itself largely to ratifying and discussing policies which have already been devised by Montemayor alone or in close conjunction with a few of his top-ranking officers.

Oftentimes policy making on the part of other NPB members simply goes by default in the following manner. During the National Policy Board sessions there may be considerable, heated debate over a specific issue with frequently what appears to be a wide divergence of opinion. But when a common denominator on which all can agree must be found, few venture to assume the responsibility for determining it. Rather it is the President - or more rarely one of his immediate associates - who must attempt to phrase what in his estimation is the dominant, underlying current of opinion which is consequently stated and defined as policy. The President, thereby allowed to be the group's spokesman, is however liable to reinterpret

1. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Art. v, Sec. 1.

2. During the most recent meeting of the National Policy Board, three additional members were admitted to the Board but it has not been stated what their authority is or if they have the power of the vote, though presumably they do. Too, their tenure of office is only for a definite and limited period of time (Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Annual Conference of the National Policy Board, October 19-22, 1957, p. 4.) It should be noted, however, that the three are close associates and personal followers of Montemayor.

opinion in such a way that it comes closest to his own line of reasoning which does not necessarily reflect accurately that of the majority. But once he takes, or is given, the initiative, his conferees tend to follow his lead and to support him without further dissent although privately they may still entertain some doubts as to the merit or practicability of his decision. Or not wishing to take what may be a lone oppositional stance in a final vote, they will remain silent and abstain from voting. In some cases, this may be due to the fact that lower-ranking officials in the national hierarchy of the FFF have, in the past, been accustomed to placing extensive reliance on the judgement of the President. Seemingly hesitant of their own position on many occasions, or perhaps unsure as to the validity or acceptability of their own views, they retreat at the last from an open and active defense of them.

Also to be noted is the fact that the "present members" of the NPB are permanent; they cannot be removed "except by death, incapacity, resignation and expulsion by the permanent members of the said Board."¹ However, this clause was slightly, but significantly, modified later when, in the Constitution, the term "original" was added to "present members"; it now reads, "present original members."² This document does not name the "members," but certainly they were meant to include Montemayor as Chairman and, at that time, Esguerra as Vice-Chairman. Nor is there, with regard to expulsion, a definitive list of offenses for which a member can be removed, though this obviously gives to the NPB extensive discretionary powers. But it would generally include any transgression which might be extremely prejudicial to the cause of the FFF and the NPB would, in most cases, render judgement by a majority vote as it did in Esguerra's case, described below. There would then be no further appeal.³ However, as if to extend the above condition, the Constitution goes on to state, in consonance with the Convention's resolution, that "the permanent membership in the National Policy Board may be diminished, replaced or increased by the permanent members thereof."⁴ There is no specification as to the exact procedure to follow in these

1. Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive Council - National FFF Convention, May 1-4, 1956, p. 2.

2. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Article V, Section 2.

3. Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor, August 30, 1957, personal interview.

4. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Article V, Section 3. Also, Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive Council - National FFF Convention, May 1-4, 1956, p. 2. It was herein stated that: "Membership in the Board may be diminished, replaced or increased by the permanent members thereof." The first word - membership - was not prefixed by "permanent"

cases; such change would likely take place by concurrence of the directors or on the sole initiative of Montemayori

In considering the National Policy Board's power of removal, the recent case of Fernando Esguerra deserves special attention for it was the first time that the NPB was to utilize this authority against one of its "permanent members" Esguerra, as co-founder of the FFF, its Executive Vice-President and one of its top administrative chiefs, has been influential within the Free Farmers movement on both the national and local levels. His constituted authority was second only to that of the FFF President. Yet in October of 1957 his service was abruptly terminated. During a closed session of the National Policy Board it was decided by unanimous vote that Esguerra was "no longer to be connected with the FFF in any manner whatsoever." The grounds for his dismissal were: "total loss of confidence, grave...risk, immorality and lack of discipline."¹ No further explanation of these allegations nor details of the proceedings were given for publication.² In addition, several of Esguerra's personal appointees and proteges in the National Office withdrew from the Federation shortly thereafter.

There is no factual evidence as to who, if anyone, instigated the move among the NPB to secure Esguerra's removal. His fitness for office had, in the past, been contested by various of the FFF leaders either because of personal rivalries or out of genuine concern. But there was no real consensus amongst his opponents and the majority appeared unwilling to challenge his authority. Nor was there any open disagreement or hostility between Esguerra and Montemayor which might have occasioned a breach. Each, though, had his devotees and Montemayor, perhaps to strengthen his personal following, did not actively discourage criticisms of his co-partner. Yet, by mid-1956 Esguerra's opposition began to grow rapidly until by 1957 his position was decidedly weak. There was one discernable aspect to this trend: that is, as Fr. Mauri's standing and influence within the national as well as the local spheres became stronger and more dominant, Esguerra's popularity

1. Letter from FFF to the writer, October 28, 1957. Esguerra was present during the NPB's special meeting.

2. Esguerra's dismissal was subsequently described in official records as an "indefinite leave of absence"; this was defined in a resolution reading: "Mr. Fernando A. Esguerra, as of this date, is no longer connected with the Federation of Free Farmers in any capacity whatsoever." (See Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Annual Conference of the National Policy Board, October 19-22, 1957, p. 21.)

seemed to lessen proportionately.¹ Certainly Esguerra had never stood in any very close or friendly relation to the Jesuit priestly and had never allied himself to the latter as had Montemayor. Esguerra had evidenced his strong misgivings as to the role assigned the clergy in the FFF movement as well as to the dominating Catholicism of the organization. Also to be considered is the fact that the FFF National Adviser, for his part, had many times used his own influence in seeking to reinforce Montemayor's status and widen his powers vis-a-vis Esguerra who has been Montemayor's only potential competitor in the upper echelons of the FFF. Indeed Fr. Mauri's bias against Esguerra came to be generally acknowledged. For Montemayor, in contrast to the former Vice-President, has been the firmest advocate of the Catholic role of the Free Farmers movement. He is, by the same token, the most positive guarantee of the FFF Adviser's continuing and future status in the movement.

Regarding the NPB's authority, it is worth mentioning that the 1956 convention reassured the NPB's tenure only "until such a time as a constitution and by-laws shall have been adopted."² But the Constitution, since then drafted and nominally approved, makes no mention of this restriction and the NPB membership is still granted a permanency of office. The only qualification - if it can be so termed - is contained in the following clause of the Constitution:

1. It is the writer's opinion that Fr. Mauri had been under constant pressure from several of his priest-associates in the Institute of Social Order to have Esguerra removed in the future "interest" and well-being of the Federation and for reasons expressed largely in terms of those advanced by the NPB. Fr. Mauri, seemingly convinced of their credibility, in turn had communicated the wishes of the Jesuits to Montemayor who, because of his long and close association with Esguerra, at first refused to consider them. There was nonetheless increased dissatisfaction among the FFF officialdom. It was during Montemayor's absence in 1957 (he was then enroute to Lebanon and the United States) that the tide apparently turned decisively against Esguerra. For when Montemayor returned, there was a concerted demand by the members of the NPB (in a rare instance of initiative taken by the NPB as a body) for a special hearing of Esguerra's case. Montemayor, by virtue of his dominant status within the NPB could no doubt have then used his influence to retain Esguerra. Yet, regardless, he chose to follow the wishes of the NPB members.

2. Federation of Free Farmers, Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive Council - National FFF Convention, May 1-4, 1956, p. 2.

As soon as the education of the leaders and members and the conditions of security render it practicable upon the determination of the National Policy Board, membership in said Board shall be as representative as possible of all the members of the Federation.¹ i

This is a rather tenuous guarantee at best and it refers primarily to representation of provincial associations; provincial participants are to be distinguished from the present, permanent members of the NPB for their tenure of office is circumscribed. Such local representation is provided for by the Charter system discussed below; suffice to say at this juncture that a Charter is dependent on - among other things - provincial elections. But to date, none have been held.

Three additional provisos in the Constitution give even greater latitude to the authority of the NPB. One assigns to the NPB the right to draft the rules and regulations for its own organization and operation regarding matters not already stipulated.² The second provides that a two-thirds majority of all the NPB can amend the Constitution; lastly, the NPB can decide upon all questions of its construction.³ Practice is, nonetheless, often divergent from theory and the Federation is no exception. Yet upon perusal of its Constitution - the most authoritative statement of FFF policy to date - one cannot but deduce that the document leaves much to be desired. For the National Policy Board, as the sole ruler of the Federation, has thus invested itself with the authority to determine the conditions and duration of its tenure and the scope of its policy-making powers. The members can, if so desired, legislate themselves in office into perpetuity. Nor is there any real provision to insure that in the long run the internal processes of the NPB will be democratized. Whether or not the NPB will eventually resort to dictatorial methods to achieve what it calls democratic ends, will largely depend on the manner in which its Chairman, Montemayor, uses his powers which are in effect virtually unlimited.

National Executive Office

The National Executive Office is charged with the execution of all policies formulated by the National Policy Board. (Yet it should be noted that in the process of administration the NEKO often determines practice which becomes policy as will be seen.) The NEKO is composed of the President, Executive Vice-President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer and others as may be deemed necessary, these officers being selected

1. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Arti V, Seci 5.

2. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Arti V, Seci 6.

3. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Arti XI, Sections 1 and 2.

by the NPB; they must likewise be members of the NPB. In addition, the National Advisor, Fr. Mauri, is permitted to attend and participate in all meetings and activities of the NEXO, but he does not, according to FFF policy, have a vote in its proceedings.¹ Noteworthy is the fact that the Chairman, and Vice-Chairman of the National Policy Board are concurrently President and Executive Vice-President of the National Executive Office.² And it is with these two central figures, particularly the former, that the focus of authority often resides.

For as chief of the National Executive Office, Montemayor has the final responsibility for seeing that the provisions of the Constitution and the policies of the National Policy Board are carried out. He directs the affairs of the NEXO and its officers are accountable to him. Montemayor also decides whether or not to consult the NEXO on matters of a more or less permanent nature such as: the procedures followed by the National Legal Counsel - his powers and duties as they relate to the client; the local leader concerned and the head of the legal department; or, the enactment of short term projects which demand immediate attention. In the final analysis the National Executive Office can accuse the President, should he overstep his authority, before the National Policy Board. But this is unlikely inasmuch as the NEXO is largely composed of the President's partisans.

The tenure of the National Executive Officers, including the President, is to be one year and "until their successors shall have been duly elected and qualified" and is, therefore, contingent again upon the NPB's discretion.³ But inasmuch as the NPB itself is a permanent, self-designated, and relatively small group, the composition of the NEXO is unlikely to be altered to any extent. The NPB, and more specifically its chairman, is the determinative power in any cases of promotion, demotion, suspension, or dismissal. The NEXO in turn holds these prerogatives with respect to "any appointed or elected official or leader not lower in rank than a provincial officer."⁴ But also of note is the absence of any prescribed rule for

1. Federation of Free Farmers, Rules and Regulations of the National Executive Office, May, 1956.

2. a. Thelmo Escalona, as of 1958, is concurrently Executive Vice-President of the NEXO and Vice-Chairman of the NPB. No information as to the method of his appointment is available at present. Likewise, Restituto David has taken over the Vice-Presidency formerly held by Abibuaga. It should be noted that both David and Escalona are lawyers whereas Abibuaga and Esguerra had no such profession.

3. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Art. VI, Sec. 5.

4. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Art. IX, Sec. 6.

promotion. Generally officers have been withdrawn from one position and reappointed to another indiscriminately¹

Too, the NEXO generally supervises and controls all FFF subordinate units, although this regulation is often only nominal in those provinces outside Luzon, such as Davao, and in newly and/or partially organized sections such as Capiz. The NEXO is also the supreme policy guide for these units as pertains to local matters, but here, too, enforcement is contingent upon the NEXO's ability to review and keep in line the operation of local FFF constituents - an ability easily compromised by administrative inefficiency. It confirms as well any grant of Charter to Provincial Associations. More importantly, there is no specified number of times that the National Policy Board is to convene; in the past its predecessor met only thrice during a period of three years and in all probability the NPB will meet with little more frequency. The National Executive Office, therefore, will no doubt continue to exert the most pervasive and authoritative direction over national and local affairs. It will, as well, directly involve itself in the decision-making process. For policy formulation occurs most frequently in transacting the day-to-day business of the FFF; and here again Montemayor is the focal point of authority.

A multitude of problems demanding definitive action which may be considerably broad in scope are daily brought to the attention of the NEXO by FFF leaders as well as by individual FFF members visiting the Manila headquarters of the Federation. In many instances these questions cannot be effectively handled by referring to any specific policy established by the NPB and hence require wholly new answers. As a rule the President deals personally with all matters of any significance - be they local or national. But if any administrative directives, important or otherwise, are issued by others on the NEXO staff, such orders must first pass through the President's hands. In the process they are generally amplified and given greater precision or are radically altered by him. Decrees may be issued in the form of "a circular letter to all leaders" or similar official statements; or they may be merely verbal pronouncements. Once given specific application, they usually become accepted practice and for all intents and purposes are considered as fixed, determinative policy. Or if not, they simply remain, as it were, "paper policy." In either case,

1. As an illustration, Antonio Abibuag, once President of the Pampanga FFF and originally a member of the now defunct National Executive Council, was reassigned to the National Office as temporary Vice-President by Montemayor. Yet other FFF officials who merited the post by reason of their seniority and proven abilities were thus by-passed. Nor did Montemayor secure the formal approval of the Pampanga or National FFF Leadership. Yet the 1956 convention saw no attempt to alter such practices which have, in the main, been tacitly accepted by the FFF officialdom though they could well cause dissension among the lower ranks.

such policy unless challenged is rarely presented to the NPB for final confirmation. Yet the leaders, to all appearances, feel themselves bound by it. But should there be expressed disagreement over "presidential policy" within the NEXO (or the NPB) the President can readily find a way around such obstructions. For due to the respect and loyalty that he commands among both the Leadership and the rank and file of the FFF, the President is often able to exert personal pressure on the FFF officials to attain what he considers desirable ends. Furthermore, in that he has assumed a type of charismatic leadership that accords well with what some authorities have described as the "follow-the-leader mentality" of the peasantry, he could, if he wished, appeal on most issues directly to the membership over the heads of his subordinates and associates. Thus far he has not felt compelled to resort to this. Such power, however, can be retained only if the President is able to maintain close and continuing contact with the peasantry. It is, furthermore, liable to reduction when and if a genuine local leadership develops to any degree of strength among the masses.

It is worth noting at this point that personal contact with the peasantry, despite the claims of the National Leadership to the contrary, is now mainly limited to week-end propaganda campaigns in the towns and barrios of Central Luzon. The Leadership is far too occupied with the voluminous affairs of the FFF to do otherwise. In other islands contact is primarily through the local leaders who communicate the center's propaganda. Nonetheless, judging by the response of the masses to the personal appearance of Montemayor, he is far above the majority of the other national officials in popularity. The FFF farmers, on the whole, fully acknowledge him to be "The Leader" in much the same way as the Filipino rural citizenry accepted Magsaysay as their personal champion. This "cult of personality," if it can be so termed, has been carefully fostered by the National Federation.

Constituting a branch of the National Executive Office² and operating directly under an Executive Officer responsible to the President, are the specialized administrative departments which existed as well under the National Executive Council, though to a far more limited extent. It is in the course of their operations that the above described policy may emerge.

1. Willis E. Sibley, "Leadership in a Philippine Barrio," (Paper submitted to the Philippine Studies Program, University of Chicago, 1955)

2. The National Executive Office has functioned in one of the ruined buildings in the old Ateneo de Manila Compound. What office equipment as exists was purchased mainly out of contributions or directly donated. Only recently has the office been moved to a more suitable building within the compound due to the generosity of Fr. Rector of the Ateneo as the old office site was being demolished.

These departments are to encompass the following fields of activity; organization, education, legal, political action, economic, land settlement, production, social, student participation and religious.¹ Blueprints for their respective projects are, as a rule, drawn up by the NEXO officers under Montemayoris direction. All appointments of departmental superiors from the Executive Officer down to the Assistant Department Heads are to be made by the President with the consent of the NEXO. But in actuality such appointments are usually left entirely to the President's discretion. Theoretically all subordinate officials within any one department are to be selected by its head "on an apprenticeship and temporary basis,"² but with the concurrence of the Executive Officer. In practice, however, the latter secures at least the implicit agreement of the President, though this sometimes involves procedural difficulties. Indeed the President often makes the selection himself. The Executive Officer is Augustin de Vera, 23 year old law student.

The NEXO chief's powers on this lower level are further enhanced by the fact that his office staff (to be distinguished from the NEXO headship) is, with the exception of a few higher ranking officials, a comparatively young and untrained group. Many are, or were, his students in college such as de Vera and in this sense they are a hand-picked crew. Inasmuch as their work is on a voluntary basis, their qualifications for selection are posed more on willingness to participate rather than competency resulting from previous experience. Likewise once such personnel are recruited into the organization, the President's delegation of powers is not usually based solely on their performance, for loyalty to the organization, which is frequently defined in terms of allegiance to the President, is held to be the foremost desideratum.

Although set up to function systematically, administration within the Federation is haphazard, scarcely fitting the pattern devised by the Leadership. The administrative staff is far from stable for its component heads and members are, by the President himself or on his orders, frequently replaced, removed, or shifted from one subdivision to another; the resultant being an inefficiency and overlapping in staff operations and an increase of Presidential headaches. The activities of the respective departments are likewise under the control and supervision of the President and he does not hesitate to personally oversee their performance and intervenes whenever he himself feels it warranted, though his orders may conflict with or confuse those already given. This is undoubtedly due in part to the tendency of the President's youthful personnel to

1. The functioning of these departments and the duties they generally hold in specific instances will be noted later during the discussion of various activities of the FFF.

2. Federation of Free Farmers, Rules and Regulations of the National Executive Office, May 1956.

depend on him for directions and decisions - a tendency he has not however disallowed. His subordinates are often unwilling or unable to assume the responsibilities of their respective offices or to follow through on their own, individual assignments. Hence it devolves on the President to accomplish what he can in the manner he thinks most advisable; and he takes over in many areas which could best be left to others.

Actually the departments are still organized on a very circumscribed scale and are considerably undermanned. The former Executive Vice-President, Esguerra, for example, was also head of Education while in office and Abibuag had to attend to the duties of the NEXO Vice-Presidency as well as those of the Land Settlement Department. There exists at present the same type of "double duty." Also, many staff officers are compelled to handle, themselves, all the details and paper work of their respective units, having no subordinates or assistants. Too, no filing system is kept. Nor is there any established working routine; the majority of staff personnel appear only irregularly in the NEXO office, usually during the mornings and some not for days at a time. Without salaries it is of course difficult to enforce discipline, and many hold outside positions. There is, on the whole, an atmosphere of informality such as existed under the directorship of the earlier National Executive Council and a general disregard for so-called bureaucratic procedures. As a result each administrative constituent may not always be fully active; a department's immediate functioning depends primarily on the importunity of an issue or problem which may fall within its sphere, rather than on simply the fact that it exists.¹ Hence, many problems which are not of an urgent nature - and even occasionally those that are - may be left unattended, for the Federation has neither the funds nor the personnel to assure their solution. Too, many departmental projects initiated and carried out to a certain point (such as the FFF's Philippine Agrarian Labor School - later described), never reach completion, even those of national importance.²

Local Structure

The Federation is pyramidal in structure with the National Office in Manila forming the apex. Theoretically the organization begins on the barrio level, though paradoxically power has

1. An indication of the emphasis now placed by the FFF on certain aspects of its work is the fact that the most active departments are those concerned with legal affairs, land settlement, and to a lesser extent education and economics. Only recently has the political action division become more active.

2. The FFF has laid future plans for each of the ten departments to have a direct implementing body in every provincial association which would ease the load now being carried by the national administrative staff. But the FFF is hardly organized for this at present.

continued to fan downward from the apex through to the barrio rather than the reverse. All FFF members within a particular barrio (or hacienda) form a Barrio (or Hacienda) Local - the basic unit of the FFF.¹ Barrio elections are not constitutionally guaranteed and are, in theory, dependent on the election of Provincial officers, the conditions of security and the educational attainment of the membership. But, in actuality, a large percentage of FFF Barrio Locals have chosen their officers such as president, vice-president, etc. Too, although these officials can be removed at the discretion of the national or higher ranking local leadership, there has rarely been any instance of this. Notwithstanding, the National Executive has still reserved to itself a final and absolute control over all FFF Locals; there is, though, direct supervision by their Municipal superiors and the Provincial Association is empowered to intervene in any local matter.

As a rule, the Barrio Local functions in an informal manner. The Locals do not, of their own accord, hold scheduled meetings of either officers or members for purposes of discussing and mutually resolving local problems. Rather, when formal sessions are convened it is at the insistence of FFF organizers and propagandists, or provincial leaders who may wish to transmit an already formulated directive to their subordinates - an edict which the Local is then expected to implement as best it can. Members of the Local do have the right to dissent, but generally they tend to accept orders from above with little question. The Local, in fact, depends heavily on the Municipal or Provincial associations for guidance. But in the absence of effective leadership from these quarters the Local looks exclusively to the National Executive as it may in any case.

The second tier of the pyramid is the Municipal (or Central) Chapter; all Barrio (or Hacienda) Locals of a town (or Central) constitute a Chapter. It is the usual practice of the National Leadership to appoint all Municipal officials to which there are few exceptions. The Provincial Association is to act as overseer of all Chapters, though the NEXO has the final jurisdiction, as well as the right of interposition in "any affair, case, problem or operation." This must be done in "consultation and coordination with" the local officials concerned.²

The Municipal Chapter, in many instances, is a relatively unimportant entity within the Federation. Often it represents

1. The Hacienda has only been recently added and holds a special and distinct place within the structure.

2. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Art. X, Sec. 3. Also note that the Constitution, in contrast to an earlier policy providing for the election of Municipal officials by the heads of all Locals within the area, makes no provision for Municipal Chapter officials to be chosen - except, of course, when education, security etc. should allow.

only a loose collection of Barrio Locals functioning primarily through the headquarters of the Provincial Association. Moreover, for purposes of administration, neighboring towns and Centrals may be temporarily grouped into districts with the Municipal Chapter thereby losing its individual identity.¹ However, the opposite may be true of the Chapter which has established a "working" office in the town to serve as a clearing house for local affairs (readying of legal briefs, filing of requests to be sent to Manila etc.) as well as a center where FFF members from outlying barrios can assemble. Such a Chapter normally maintains an active existence separate from that of its superior, the Provincial Association, and may constitute an important cog in the FFF administrative wheel, particularly if the Provincial Association is weak. The Santa Barbara FFF Chapter in Pangasinan is one example.

Lastly is the Provincial Association - the least autonomous of the FFF units at present - composed of all Municipal (and Central) Chapters organized in one province.² This Provincial Association, however, may not be reflective of an entire province for oftentimes the FFF has succeeded in unionizing only one of its areas (a situation which obtains in the municipality as well). The unit as such is not accorded full recognition as a chartered Association and is, on the whole, barred from National Federation affairs.

However, full participation in national activity by the rank and file of the Federation is the announced goal; such will be realized with the eventual representation of all provincial Associations on the National Policy Board.³ This is provided

1. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution Art. IV, Sec. 8.

2. The situation does obtain, in some instances, wherein other provinces in the process of becoming organized will operate through and be represented by one adjacent Provincial Association. The province of Bataan, for example, has been administered wholly through the San Fernando office of the Pampanga FFF. Actually, no real effort has been made to enforce the jurisdictional distinctions between the various FFF components or to clarify their respective powers. This will probably be wholeheartedly attempted only when an area has become fully organized and operative with an active and trained leadership on each level.

3. Although some three or more Provincial Associations are presently on the Board, yet the delegates have never been elected and, not being duly qualified, hold their seats on the Board only by the special dispensation of the permanent members thereof. Pampanga, Tarlac and Bulacan are, nonetheless, permitted to vote, this vote being controlled in the sense that the presidents are appointed officials. But these provinces figure prominently on the national scene by virtue of their large membership, active officials and numerous activities. Hence the National Executive is not apt to disregard totally their wishes.

for by the Charter system. The National Executive Office confers the Charter when and if "the province has been more or less fully organized, a provincial election held, and the members thereof have paid their dues."¹ Under these circumstances it is not surprising to note that no Provincial Association has yet been granted a Charter. However, once issued, the Charter entitled the provincial unit to elect a delegate to the National Policy Board of which he shall be a member. But there is one important restriction. That is, the National President exercises discretionary power with regard to both the clearance of leaders as well as to the ideological prerequisites for officials. He can thereby disqualify any elected representative. Too, the provincial delegate holds his chair only for a "definite and limited time," the duration to be "specifically determined" by the NPBi.

The Charter is as well a grant of autonomy, one salient feature being that the Charter (and hence the NEXO as its grantor) specifies the extent of independence accorded the Provincial Association.² The NEXO further inhibits the freedom of the FFF Provincials for, although they may be chartered, they still "...shall follow all policies laid down for them by said (NEXO) office."³ Though they can formulate their own by-laws, nonetheless, such laws must not run counter to the National Constitution and policies and are subject to review by the NEXO. Also significant is the fact that no standard for revocation of a Charter has been outlined. In all likelihood the National Executive would make the final decision. However, a local organization theoretically has the right of secession if the majority of its card-holding members so agree, either by a signed petition or by a certified vote and with the approval of the National Executive.

Thus the awarding (or revocation) of a Charter falls within the jurisdiction of the National Executive Office and it determines the content of the Charter as well. The center can thereby pull into line any recalcitrant associations; they cannot hope to attain to the policy-making level without a Charter and are not in a position to dictate or influence its terms. Even after becoming chartered they do not know full freedom.

However, with the Charter system yet to be implemented, the National Leadership continues to retain full dominion over all provincial associations. It is on this level that the National Executive most vigorously attempts to assert its i

1. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Art. IV, Seci 5.

2. Likewise "Upon the grant of a Charter and subject to the specifications therein, the Provincial Association shall determine the structure and operation of the Chapters, Locals and other units under its jurisdiction." See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Arti IV, Seci 10.

3. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Art. X, Sec. 1.

influence. All provincial leaders are to be directly appointed by the top Executive (usually the President)¹ and all provincial affairs are to be under its immediate supervision. As the Constitution has expressly authorized:

Before a province is granted a Chapter (Charter), the initial organization of members and units and all their activities therein shall be under the direction of the National Executive Office.²

Nonetheless, dictation from Manila is not so rigidly imposed on the associations as might be supposed. Staff and fund limitations, among other reasons, often force the National Executive to extend considerably discretion to local officials who, not infrequently, select their own associates without express approval. The Provincial President, for example, is accustomed to choosing all officers under him on the provincial, and sometimes municipal and barrio, levels.

Notwithstanding, freedom of choice is subject to certain informal restraints designed by the National Executive to supplant its own supervisory deficiencies. The most effective one is provided through the offices of the parish priest; he is normally appointed as advisor to a particular FFF unit through the Bishop of his area whom the National FFF has contacted for this purpose. The Federation Leadership "strongly recommends" (usually through a circular letter) that all local leaders obtain the advice of the priest in any selection of subordinates and assistants. They may also be urged to seek, if necessary, the guidance of the clergy in handling difficult tenancy problems. Although such counsel can be disregarded, it is more often followed for the priest has acquired a status of no little prominence and prestige and when he speaks, it is usually with the power to command.

Supposedly the priest is "the best deterrent to Communist infiltration" as well as the best source of information regarding possible leaders. Yet he customarily resides in the "poblacion" and rarely has any continued contact with those living outside its immediate confines; so that it is doubtful if he is really in a position to accurately evaluate the talents of potential leaders and officers or to know firsthand the conditions obtaining in the barrios. Too, ecclesiastical counsel is apt to be colored by the fact that the priest is frequently the mentor of landed families in the poblacion as well as the recipient of numerous "gratuities" from these

1. The President has occasionally employed the method of sending out circular letters to all officials within a province appraising them of the appointment of, for example, the provincial treasurer. He is thereby preempting what should rightfully be the prerogatives of the provincial head who is more qualified to determine who should be his subordinates.

2. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Art. IV, Sec. 6.

quarters donated for maintenance of his parish. Hence his sympathy for the FFF, or at best his impartiality, cannot be assured. Not to be overlooked are the many priests, actively engaged on behalf of the Federation, who do not fit such a description though they are more exceptional.

The Provincial President is, furthermore, allowed considerable leeway in organizing his association as he sees fit. This might include the distribution of powers and the division of functions among the various components - the Chapters and Locals. In theory such arrangements, without the NEXO's approval, are permissible only after a grant of Charter. Too, the provincial units often take the sole initiative in instigating local projects and may pursue many activities with which the center never becomes familiarized. Yet here again the NEXO has tried to keep some check on the provincial divisions through required monthly progress reports.¹ Where the provincial unit is firmly established, with a well furnished and adequately manned office, this proves reasonably effective. When this does not hold true, the National Executive must generally rely on the verbal reports of local leaders - transmitted in person or by way of subordinates sent to Manila. Consequently the NEXO has incomplete files or none at all on many FFF units which limits any thorough review of local affairs. Nor is it equipped to handle the volume of paper work necessary to bring them up to date.

Regional Divisions

"For purposes of coordination and efficiency, a number of contiguous or adjacent provinces may be grouped into a Region.² The Federation has thus divided its jurisdictional areas into various regions such as Central, Northern or Southern Luzon; the boundaries of no single area are fixed and, in fact, there is rather frequent reorganization of regional divisions as further FFF units and sections are added to the membership.

A regional coordinator is appointed by Manila to supervise and coordinate all activities within a section. He also keeps check on the provincial president and may at times usurp his appointing prerogatives; or on the other hand he may handle the tenancy disputes which arise within the president's bailiwick. The regional coordinator also travels around his zone as a so-called "trouble-shooter," ascertaining thereby what problems and issues exist and then reporting them to the

1. These reports generally relate to: organizational progress within the province; jurisdiction of the association i.e. towns, barrios etc.; the number of public meetings held together with their attendance and outcome; the number of conciliation cases handled; and, current problems and projects.

2. See Appendix II: FFF Constitution, Artc IV, Secc 9.

National President. In some cases he may act as an organizer in those regions where there is little unionization.

On the whole, coordination and supervision is exceedingly difficult to achieve. The regional leader fails manytimes to keep in contact with the provincial association and with Manila as well. Too, his activities may be carried on without the knowledge of either and sometimes in conflict with the policies of both. However, inasmuch as there are not a sufficient number of able and trustworthy men to fill each and every post - the same problem which plagues the national organization exists at the local level - there is consequently no distinct demarcation between specific functions and many overlap. As a rule, the regional leader holds a rather vague status. For example, Leonardo Vega, Bicol regional coordinator, is simultaneously President of the Camarines Norte FFF. The President and provincial legal counsel of Camarines Sur, Jose Arrive, aids Vega in his work as coordinator. Arrive is also employed in the Provincial Governor's office. The regional coordinator does have a necessary function to perform, but the regional system needs much perfecting before performance meets expectations.

Problems of Centralization

The centralization which has long characterized Philippine institutions and which was a distinct aspect of the Magsaysay regime has been duplicated to a remarkable extent in the Federation of Free Farmers. However, the National Leadership has long claimed the contrary, and has vigorously avowed:

The Federation of Free Farmers is not an organization that helps the farmers, but is distinct and separate from them. The FFF is the farmers. It operates on the principle of self-help through unity and coordination of thought and action.¹

Notwithstanding, this much announced aim has been largely negated by the top-heavy character of the organization.

The results of over-centralization are not difficult to discern. Not only is the Manila FFF forced to resolve disputes - very often trivial and personal - between local leaders who appeal to Manila for mediation, but on matters involving decisions of only the slightest significance - be they utilization of fertilizers, purchases of office equipment or procurement of transportation - Manila is consulted. Too, the Federation farmer, long accustomed to dependency on his superiors, may actually come with others of his locale to Manila having spent a considerable portion of his meager earnings in travel. There he will demand of the national

1. The Federation of Free Farmers, A Report on Operations (from October 1953 to June, 1956).

officials the repair of a school building or a road, land expropriation or the installation of an artesian well. After he has been politely heard by some harassed official in the National Office (usually the President), he will simply be told that his provincial officer must prepare and submit a memorandum to the NEXO outlining the problem to be solved - memorandum, it might be added, which usually winds up on the desk of the President of the Philippines for final disposition.¹ Of course the psychological satisfaction which such individuals or farmer delegations receive through physical contact with the Manila office must not be overlooked. But taken in total these members are representative of only a small proportion of the Federation's entire following while the time which the national leaders - often obliged to work in other capacities - must devote to their oftentimes minor troubles is considerable. Hence the principle of self-help is far from realized for with the center continuing to hamstring the locals, dependency is fostered.

Nor has the Leadership's declaration that "the FFF is the farmers," operating through unity and coordination of thought and action, become a reality. The various segments of the FFF are, in actuality, detached; one association may have little knowledge of what is transpiring in another area or in Manila for that matter. Hence the provincial units and, even more so, the barrio locals are prone to feel a great remoteness and isolation from the National Federation as well as from one another. Consequently national morale is impaired and there is little of that "esprit de corps" which gives vitality and purpose to a mass movement. What unity of thought as does exist is only that of the ruling clique and it has yet to translate its concepts into mass thinking. Likewise the entire chain of command which should give coherence to FFF policies and actions is not infrequently severed. This is due in part to the difficulties of maintaining an effective liaison between Manila and the more remote areas such as the Visayas or Palawan widely separated by water from Luzon and not always readily accessible. It is as well a result of the inability of the central leaders to oversee such a far-flung membership as they command. Hence communication may never be established to any degree of workability; and even when contact is made, orders issued by the center may be slow and circuitous in reaching the various member units - orders which may have no bearing on the National FFF and could have better been left to local discretion. In reverse, many issues of national importance which should receive careful consideration and approval from the

1. This ultimately entails a gigantic volume of correspondence and detail work which must be handled, as previously noted, by a very limited, unsalaried and inexperienced office staff and supervised by an already overburdened President. As a result many essential projects and urgent problems needing immediate attention go by default or remain unattended until they finally resolve themselves - sometimes adversely for the Federation members.

National Executive never reach it until after action on them has been taken. In the eventuality that such action runs counter to the interests of the movement, the Leadership is then usually called upon to extricate the local organization involved and to amend, if possible, the situation. Or it must simply accept it as a "fait accompli."

All in all the Federation has yet far to go before the rank and file feel themselves to be an organic whole - a national organization. As it is now, their prime loyalty and sense of identification is almost exclusively to their immediate unit. A certain degree of this is, of course, inevitable, but it is apt to make concerted, single-minded action on a national scale virtually impossible. Centralization exists largely because the National officialdom has reasoned, however illogically, that the membership is unprepared to assume full responsibilities; and that only by retaining full and pervasive control will Communist infiltration be prevented and organizational stability assured. They may very well have a case. However, it hardly facilitates efficiency in administration, clarity of policy or coordination of actions. Indeed, as will be later noted, centralization lies at the heart of the majority of difficulties encountered by the Federation.

The question likewise remains as to what might happen should the ideological complexion of the National Leadership change or its political orientation alter. In such a situation it is likely that the rank and file would be impotent to redirect any such trends, having no organized force independent from that of the National Executive. Furthermore, if the central figures of the Federation headship - particularly the National President who is now the main prop of the organization - should be removed for some cause, who would be the successors? No real system has yet been devised whereby democratic succession, voicing the will of the majority, can be assured. Though there are certain key leaders in the provinces who might command enough strength to sustain the movement, nonetheless, there are various factors such as the strong tendency to regionalism which militate against this possibility. In any eventuality, there is apt to be an intense rivalry for national power among local leaders which may irreparably divide the Free Farmers movement. A more immediate cause for worry, however, is that the organization may lose its original vitality and direction as so commonly occurs in cases of extreme centralization.

Especially is this so in view of the slow progress in developing a "grass roots" leadership and the delay in granting Charters.

III. UNIONIZATION

Perhaps of paramount consideration in an appraisal of the Federation of Free Farmers as a mass agrarian movement are the methods by which it enlists a popular following and the effectiveness of their utilization.

Methods and Policy

In the majority of cases FFF organizers are appointed by the National Executive, though instances occur wherein a local leader will, without express authorization, organize those farmers within his area. Too, a provincial president or regional coordinator may be, as well, a FFF unionizer; even national officials will occasionally engage in the work.¹ FFF labor recruiters are generally employed on a volunteer basis and must provide for their own transportation and maintenance costs though a few do receive small stipends.² On the whole this lack of funds has continued to hinder FFF unionization as it has other FFF activities.

The individual recruiter is given a certain latitude in devising and implementing his own organizational schemes; he may, for example, divide an area into districts and select his own organizers. He may even be empowered to appoint temporary local officials for any FFF units he establishes. He is, however, subject to various procedural limitations. The National Federation, in harmony with its avowed aim of promoting agrarian peace, stresses the concept of class cooperation rather than that of class conflict. It has, therefore, abjured the system of infiltrating a farm without the knowledge of the owner. No FFF Local, the Leadership avows, is to be formed without first consulting the landlord in an attempt to gain his compliance. However, this policy is exceedingly difficult to implement for, as cited below, the majority of landlords offer only opposition and hostility. But unionizers are little deterred by this and are more apt to follow the maxim "those not for us are against us." The FFF leaders are, moreover, obliged to contact parish priests and higher ranking clergymen in each barrio or poblacion and to enlist their aid and advice

1. Ben Sabban, organizer of the Cagayan Free Farmers, is also Councilor-elect of Tuguegarao and in this latter capacity he is able to bring the influence of his councilorship into play for the benefit of the Federation. He now claims, after a few months of activity, some 4,000 members.

2. This was made possible by an agreement, signed between the FFF and the Asia Foundation in 1956, whereby each organizer has received a small peso allotment. (Information obtained from Mri Montemayor, May 16, 1956, personal interview.)

in organizing the farmers.¹ This is a matter both of protocol and of expediency. Ecclesiastical approval is essential, the Leadership believes, for without it the powers of the priestly office may be mobilized against the FFF.^r Hence it is not unusual to find a directive issued "To All Leaders" which states:^r "...The help of the Bishops must be sought.^r It must be shown to the Bishops and priests that the Free Farmers movement will help their apostolic work^r"²

It is likewise the officialized custom for FFF priest-advisors to accompany the recruiters on their campaign tours.^r Ostensibly the priest travels with them in order to say mass in the barrios they visit. "But more than that," the leaders explain, "his presence is the strongest force that makes the organization grow.^r When a group of Free Farmers officials go with a priest to a town or barrio, the farmers will say: 'Those people cannot be racketeers.^r For a priest is with them.^r And the landlords will say: 'Those people cannot be communists for if they are so, how can a priest vouch for them?'"³

The National Office attempts to facilitate the work of its field staff by means of the circular letter. A brief statement of FFF aims and a certification of its union status are, when possible, sent to public officials of the province to which the unionizer is assigned; the officials are also asked "to extend all possible help...in the task of organizing the small farmers and tenants for their own protection and uplift in consonance with the policy of the present administration^r (Magsaysay)."⁴ In addition, letters, which may be distributed to all FFF leaders, officials and others concerned, provide the labor recruiter with further, more specific

1. Not infrequently the priest is a landlord; he will refuse to grant an audience to FFF leaders and will either disregard or preach against the movement. There are, of course, many cases to the contrary.^r For example, one parish priest was warned by the wealthy landholders of his town that he must cease preaching against usurious practices and commending the Federation if he hoped to continue receiving financial support for his church. (Information obtained from parish priest in Bacolod City, May 5, 1956, personal interview.) The parish priest may allow the recruiter to present talks on the FFF before meetings of such Catholic groups as the Legion of Mary.^r If the groups are enthusiastic, they may invite the organizer to join them in their monthly barrio-to-barrio campaign for the Church and he can thus campaign for the FFF under their aegis.^r (Information obtained from Doroteo Mesa, Iloilo FFF President, May 7, 1956, personal interview.)

2. Circular Letter No. 2, To All Leaders^r; June 16, 1955^r

3. Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 56.^r

4. Letter from FFF to Public Defender of Davao City, August 14, 1954^r

authorization "to organize all tenants and small landowners in the name of the Federation."¹ This safeguards the recruiter should he be questioned and as well insures against fraudulent use of the Federation's name.²

During the provincial campaign, FFF organizers travel from town to town; they visit every barrio regardless of how remote or inaccessible it may be. In the spirit of many of their less reputable predecessors, they attempt to identify themselves as closely as possible with the peasants to win their confidence, generally "living their life" - a method, it might be added, that brings conspicuous results. These trips are often quite arduous, lasting for months at a time with three or four barrio meetings ordinarily scheduled per day.

The usual and most effective technique employed is that of the mass rally. This at times serves the twofold purpose of membership recruitment and mass education - this latter being an important feature of the FFF's educational project.³ Such a rally is frequently staged in the town or village plaza and, when feasible, is scheduled to coincide with a local fiesta or barrio dance.⁴ The unionizers, or the farmers themselves, may request the presence of one or more of the national officials; they lend authenticity and importance to the occasion and will attract a larger audience which not uncommonly numbers well over a thousand. This in turn enables the Leadership to renew its contact with the peasantry. The National advisor, Fr. Mauri, often participates as well. When possible loudspeakers and music are provided to announce the meeting though the organizers prepare as much advance publicity (such as placards etc.) as their time permits. Given foreknowledge of the rally - usually by word of mouth - the barrio farmer does not hesitate to walk many kilometers to attend; some come

1. Letter from FFF "To Whom It May Concern," April 12, 1956.

2. In an attempt to keep a record of its membership campaigns, the National Office requires of all its recruiters a written report covering their activities. This report not only indicates the progress of the movement in specific areas, but it serves to account for all fees collected by the unionizers; this is also a means of checking fraud. Such records, always reviewed by Montemayor, are to be handled by the Organization Department, excepting fee collections which are under the National Treasurer. The Department is, however, not directly responsible either for issuing circulars or appointing officials as this is usually Montemayor's work.

3. See ppi 110-112 for a full discussion of this project.

4. These occasions are widely attended by the peasantry and afford an excellent opportunity for propagandists. The FFF itself, has staged FFF barrio dances for just this reason and they have proved remarkably successful in stirring up interest in and enthusiasm for the movement.

out of curiosity, some because of genuine interest, while others come no doubt because they have little else to do and this offers diversion (there is always the inevitable heckler in the crowd who contributes to the liveliness of the gathering.)

The speeches delivered on most occasions are quite lengthy, some lasting an hour or more.¹ The aims, functions and significance of the Federation are repeated many times over in very simple, lucid terms that the individual tao can understand, but nevertheless interspersed with the usual rhetorical flourishes to which the Filipino is so susceptible. Copies of the FFF Manifesto printed in the vernacular are then distributed among the prospective members. After a lapse of several weeks the organizers return to the district (or barrio) to further propagandize and to supply those interested with application blanks.

Difficulties Encountered

In the course of its unionizing the Federation frequently encounters stubborn resistance from landed interests. Only two weeks after the FFF's formal inauguration in Porac, the caciques in that vicinity had assembled to take concerted action against the FFF which found itself in a precarious position for, at the onset, it was little able to defend the rights of its new members and thereby prove its intent. Even later, as the strength of the movement grew, hostility has rarely lessened; the landed groups have sought repeatedly to discourage the FFF leaders through cajolery, outright bribery or even coercion. When such methods fail, as invariably they do, the landlord will threaten his tenants with ejection if they attempt to join the Free Farmers movement. This may prove more successful if the FFF cannot wholly convince the tenants of its ability to stand effectively in their defense should they be ousted.

Opposition likewise stems from local politicians or government officials who, in most instances, are also landholders. As an illustration, the former Mayor of Lubao, Pampanga, stated publicly that he would not permit FFF organizational activities within his jurisdiction. In blatant denial of the freedom of assembly guaranteed under the Philippine Constitution, the Mayor called a meeting of barrio lieutenants and landlords and ordered them to ban all FFF Assemblies. When his ultimatum was not enforced he sent armed guards to police

1. This writer has attended some rallies where speech-making, in total, has lasted over five hours and during which the same audience almost to a man (woman and child) has remained. If the meeting proves to be too long there may be intermissions which are usually taken up with eating, gossiping and entertainment; a local musician may display his talents on the guitar or the "village belle" may sing an "FFF song" if the meeting has been prepared in advance.

the barrio areas.¹ The history of the Federation is replete with cases such as this:

Furthermore, the Federation, like other "agrarian reform" movements, has frequently been entitled Communist. This has provided a justification for illegal action and a convenient propaganda tool. The barrio populace has repeatedly been warned that the FFF is a "brother of the 'balahapsi led by Huks and untitled lawyers."² In countering this the Federation has received some help as well as hindrance from the Armed Forces of the Philippines. When Philippine Army officers detained FFF organizers on the grounds that they were Huk inspired, Coli Montemayor of the AFP (Montemayor's uncle) was forced to issue radiograms, by the authority of President Magsaysay "ordering" the cooperation of Army field detachments. On other occasions the Army has come to the rescue of FFF leaders when local officials or landlords have employed force against them.³

The rapidity of FFF expansion is also hampered, ironically enough, by the suspicions of the peasant for in the past he has too often been victimized by counterfeit labor leaders. Too, the memory of the Huk's final betrayal of his cause and the government's military campaigns against them has not yet been effaced.⁴ Consequently the barrio farmer is loath to involve himself in any movement which, supposedly instigated for his benefit, might prove to the contrary. The tao like-wise may be apathetic to any efforts aimed at improving his

1. This is not surprising in view of the fact that in four barrios of Lubao the landowners are almost all leasee landlords who exact produce on a 50/50 share basis and follow talindua and "no ration" practices. Reputedly the Mayor did not want the new tenancy law implemented in his area - a law which the Federation was pledged to uphold.

2. This particular piece of oratorical calumny was delivered by a former Mayor of Concepcion, Tarlac, in the Municipal Building while the FFF staged a rally in the adjacent town square.

3. An instance of this occurred, again in Concepcion, when FFF organizers were ordered to leave the area at gun-point. Paradoxically, the Army sent an armoured truck to "protect" the leaders. Such a show of force greatly impressed both the town officials and the barrio inhabitants.

4. As will be recalled, the peasants were very much the victims of unbridled military suppression of any or all "suspected Huks" before Magsaysay was appointed Secretary of National Defense by former President Quirino.

lot^d Generally, however, the barrio farmer is still liable, once his initial suspicions are allayed, to unquestioning acceptance of any propaganda cleverly phrased - especially that of an emotional content.^c It is this "gullibility" that is of such concern to the FFF leadersⁱⁿ appraising Communist activity; on the other hand they do not hesitate to "exploit" it for purposes they judge will redound to the peasants' benefit^c

Other Agrarian Groups

The Federation has not been alone in the field of unionization for other groups^{have} also been cognizant of the power^c which a well-organized, tenant-farmers^c movement could afford^c. Among these, as to be expected,^{care} the Communists and their proteges^c. The FFF strategy thus far has been to organize as rapidly as possible thereby hoping to keep abreast of, or outdistance, the Communists.² Open to speculation, however, is the intensity of the Communist campaign in the Philippines among the native population³ as well as the extent of Communist infiltration in the countryside. Some discount the imminence of the threat and tend to place it outside the Republic primarily in Communist China; while others aver it to be a very real danger which must be met by all possible measures.⁴

The Federation, jockeying for propaganda advantage, belongs logically to the latter group who fear subversion from within the country. For Communism has given the National FFF Leadership its most acceptable excuse for maintaining an exclusive position of authority. Likewise its loudly promul-

1. One elderly peasant, who had labored all his life under great hardships, was once asked by the writer if he felt he had improved his life or made any advancement during those 40 years^c. He replied, "none."^c But when further questioned as to whether or not he was fully content with his lot, he replied emphatically, "yes^c". And he is only one of many examples which could be cited. As one author reflects: "In the past, rural apathy has been matched by urban cynicism,^c based on the belief that nothing could change the outlook of the tao." See Hunt, Sociology in the Philippine Setting.

2. Information obtained from FFF Leadership, January 10, 1956, personal interview^c

3. The native population is to be distinguished from the "overseas Chinese" residing in the Republic among whom the Communists are known to be active.

4. The Communist Party in the Philippines was recently outlawed on June 19, 1957.^c (See R. A. Smith, Philippine Freedom 1946-1958, p. 245.) Also see J. Crisol, The Red Lie for a description of communistic activity in the Philippines.

gated anti-Communist stand has won for it support from many quarters, notably the Asia Foundation and the Catholic Church. While perhaps exaggerating the influence of subversives, the Leadership nevertheless claims that the Federation has offered considerable competition to communistic forces in the field by depriving them of their necessary mass support and successfully propagandizing against them¹. At any rate, the existence of a national, non-communist agrarian group among the rural population should be counted as one deterrent to communism in the Philippines.

Aside from the Communists, numerous attempts have been made by "reformers" of all types to establish so-called tenant unions - some within the lifetime of the Federation. The majority, however, have either proven counterfeit or they have failed and eventually disappeared. Yet the appearance of these peasant associations has contributed, the FFF explains, to some confusion among the farmers; they have little conception of which union, if any, they should join. The FFF, in order to convince the tenant of its own reliability and win his preference, has been forced to rely very heavily on well-conceived and widely published propaganda as well as on constant and effective organizational campaigns.

Occasionally, however, the leaders of smaller unions, such as the Laguna Rural Farmers' Association or the Freeman's Association in Malabago, Davao led by a certain Toca and claiming 400 members, do appear in the National Office requesting affiliation. However, as often happens, the groups only seek the benefits accruing to such affiliation rather than a complete merger whereby they would lose their controlling authority. The requests are normally granted if no other arrangement can be effected and the FFF counts the membership of such semi-autonomous organizations as its own though it tries nonetheless to eventually attain their integration. Inasmuch as dispersal of FFF benefits is dictated to some extent by a member group's standing within the Federation, this is usually the result.

On the other hand, the Federation has attempted to coordinate its efforts with some unions. In Negros Occidental, for example, such coordination has been effected with the Federation

1. For example, Fr. Mauric when speaking to mass assemblies or to individuals in the barrios, has proven to be a great asset to the anti-communist cause of the movement. With his stories of communist methods and exploits in China, he has - or so the leaders assert - helped to destroy whatever attraction communism might have held for the rural folk. The FFF has also tried by written means - such as its former newspaper "Solidaridad" and various pamphlets - to counter the effectiveness of the Communist news sheet "Titis" which is reputedly of wide circulation. The FFF, furthermore, has attempted to coordinate its efforts with the Psycho-War Office of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

of Free Workers. A priest, Fr. Dacudao, is organizer for the FFW in the sugar centrals and acts concurrently as advisor and unionizer for the FFF among sugar plantation laborers. There has been no attempt to delimit the boundaries within which each union will operate, although both are now active in the Victorias Milling District.

Progress in Unionization

In view of the numerous obstacles in unionizing the Filipino peasantry, the Federation of Free Farmers has made considerable advances. Within the first one and one-half years of operation the Free Farmers movement had spread to the provinces of Pampanga, Tarlac, Bulacan, Pangasinan and Nueva Ecija as well as several provinces to the south and could claim a membership of approximately 15,000. By March of 1957 membership had increased to 36,860 with FFF units established in some 24 provinces. Though the main strength of the Federation is still in Central Luzon, nonetheless, the organization has begun to expand in the southern and northern provinces.¹ Within three months of organizational activity, the membership of the Federation in Negros Occidental alone reached 3,600 with the change in membership restrictions effective the latter part of 1956 whereby sugar plantation laborers and the much exploited "sacadas" were included.

The fact that the Federation, since its inception in October of 1953, now claims in its most recent tabulation 50,000² members attests to both the obviously "felt need" of the rural populace for unionization and the extent to which the Federation has succeeded in winning their confidence. However, this is far from being a numerical majority. For example, it is estimated that in seven provinces of Central Luzon alone there are approximately 140,000 tenants or more considering that this figure is based on the 1948 census.³ Fishermen, small

1. These provinces include, besides those listed, Laguna, Quezon, Camarines Sur and Norte, Davao, Iloilo, Bataan, Palawan, Capiz, Isabela, Samar, Antique, Zamboanga, Ilocos Sur and Norte, Cebu, Leyte, Zambales and Cagayan. Eleven provinces are being organized under the Asia Foundation plan.

2. This figure, in contrast to that of March 1957, includes those members who had not then been completely processed and those organizations such as the Leyte Peasants and Laborers Union and Bicol Region Farmers Assn. which had not received affiliation.

3. Frate Bull, Philippine Land Reform 1950-1958, p. 42r. Mr. Bull's estimate is based on the Ribera and MacMillan report. The seven Central Luzon provinces include Bataan, Batangas, Bulacan, Cavite, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga and Tarlac.

farm owners and other groups which would fall within the FFF membership classification, are not included. Hence, the Federation, while entitling itself the only national peasants' movement in the Philippines, has yet a considerable distance to go before this claim can be vindicated. Nonetheless, it has embarked on what might be termed an overly ambitious line of activities many of which are still in the blueprint stage. The Federation, as a viable mass agrarian organization, must be judged in the final analysis, not by its roster of members, but rather by the extent to which it has successfully implemented its program of action.

IV. ACTIVITIES

The FFF Leadership - a small group of predominant lawyer-professionals - has outlined a program of action which is ostensibly designed to further the cause of the 50,000 FFF members. The Federation's plan of attack on the many acute problems of the Filipino peasantry is a three-pronged one and patterned in many respects after the program initiated by the former Magsaysay administration.¹

The organization, mainly in conjunction with the Philippine government, has sought to ameliorate the distressed conditions of its rural membership through the following means; establishment of cooperatives; initiation of various rural development projects; and, educational and informational campaigns. The Federation has likewise attempted both to relieve agrarian tensions and to readjust the pattern of tenure. Through legal defense the FFF purports to safeguard the rights of its members and by conciliation, to promote agrarian peace. These palliative measures, however, are only subsidiary to the FFF's paramount objective; namely, "ownership by every farmer of a family-size farm through settlement of public agricultural lands and by the expropriation of big landed estates." This is to be effected primarily through political action.

Rural Amelioration

Cooperative Movement

The authors of the FFF "cooperative movement" have been motivated by the twofold conclusion that (1) "the only effective means of self-help through cooperative effort" is a Farmer's organization;² and, (2) "the only answer to the problem of alien control of retail trade" is a Farmer's cooperative.³ Hence the Federation has sought to apply the cooperative principle to its membership, many of whom have been slavishly dependent on the beneficence of the middleman and usurer - often a Filipino landlord.⁴ Supposedly the move-

1. The regime sought to extend and intensify government services in the barrios, to raise the standard of living and increase agricultural production and to alter the pattern of land tenure and landlord-tenant relations. See David Wurfel, "Philippine Agrarian Reform Under Magsaysay," Far Eastern Survey, January 1958, p. 7.

2. Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 15.

3. FFF, What is the Federation Of Free Farmers, (undated brochure).

4. Frc Mauri has estimated that "tenants and small farmers in the Philippines are losing 500 million (pesos) a year to middlemen." See Federation of Free Farmers, Land to the Tiller, Part I, p. 5.

ment is to gradually embrace all other needs and activities of the FFF farmer such as marketing, cultivation and pest control, but hitherto all endeavors have been mainly confined to consumers cooperatives.

With this in view the first FFF co-op was inaugurated in Alaminos, Pangasinan on January 17, 1955. Not long after, another store was founded in Sta. Barbara, Pangasinan and one in Candon, Ilocos Sur. However, these latter two have been relatively inactive; only the Alaminos Co-op can claim to be in full operation. Shares contributed by FFF members form the greater part of the cooperative stores' capital. The amount, however, is wholly insufficient for their numerous requisites despite occasional donations from the National Office.

The co-ops have, in the main, elicited little response from FFF members. For example, out of 2,000 FFF farmers in the Alaminos area, only 260 could be classified as investors with a minimum share of 1 peso and a total contribution of 600 pesos.¹ Too, though all FFF farmers are encouraged to patronize the Alaminos Co-op, reportedly only 500 have done so.² The store is correspondingly small (one room which serves also as the provincial FFF office) and carries only a limited stock of various items. NARIC (National Rice and Corn Corporation) rice is also made available by special arrangements with the NARIC office in Manila, though a recent liberalized policy allows for local requisitioning. Occasionally the farmers may sell some of their goods through the store, though the volume of such sales is negligible. These and similar difficulties have continued to hamper the expansion and efficient operation of the Alaminos Co-op as well as its two counterparts in Sta. Barbara and Candon.

Contrary to the hope of its originators, the FFF cooperative movement has simply failed to take root. The FFF leaders have attempted to rationalize this failure in terms of the existing deficiencies of rural society. A major complaint of the FFF headship is the farmer's self-evident lack of interest in, or even suspicion of, the cooperative venture and hence his unwillingness to actively participate in its functioning. This attitude, the FFF leaders explain, is in turn attributable to the farmer's inadequate training for or total inexperience in such an undertaking; many have no understanding of its principles or practices nor any sense of responsibility to its aims. The majority, expecting profitable results overnight,

1. Information obtained from Mri Porfirio Callanto, Manager, December 20, 1955, personal interview.

2. The total volume of sales is consequently small. Yet the FFF claims that two Chinese retail merchandisers have closed their stores in Alaminos due to FFF competition. These figures were obtained in 1956, it should be noted.

are easily discouraged.¹ Primarily due to Fr. Mauri's urging the Federation has, with his assistance, made some effort to educate its members in cooperation and self-help, but the multitude of unrelated activities undertaken by the organization has nullified this policy.^c

Actually, the Federation's cooperative venture has been almost totally eclipsed by the Agricultural Credit and Cooperative Financing Administration (ACCFA). Established in 1952-53 by legislative enactment, the ACCFA has instigated a marketing and credit financing program "as an integral part of the national program of rural development."² To this end it has instituted the FaCoMas - Farmers Cooperative Marketing Associations - in municipalities throughout the country. The FaCoMa store may also supply goods for consumer purchases.³ Well aware of the advantages to be gained, the Federation has pursued a policy of what it terms "infiltration of FaCoMas"; FFF members are urged to actively participate in their local FaCoMa with the end in mind of taking over its control, generally at the managerial level. This has been given express sanction and encouragement by ACCFA so long as it is attained legally. However, the Federation is perhaps too intent on the loan benefits to be derived from FaCoMa affiliation for it has repeatedly stressed that credits can be most readily secured through the FaCoMa for its members; this will decrease the tenant's financial dependency on the landlord and correspondingly increase his bargaining power and thus the strength of the FFF movement.⁴

1. See Cooperatives Administration Office, Ninth Annual Report (for Fiscal Year 1954-1955), p. 19. This agency complains also of the "lukewarm attitude" of the masses towards the cooperative movement and explains it in terms similar to those expressed by the FFF. This may in part account for the fact that the Board of Directors of the Alaminos Co-op who number eleven - each representing one barrio and supposedly elected by an assembly of the regular members - has never held a meeting though it is to supervise the operation of the Co-op and formulate its policies. Hence all authority is usually foisted upon an often harassed and unwilling manager who alone stands accountable. Consequently the FFF Co-ops have had a large turnover in managerial personnel which has not contributed to the smooth functioning of the stores.

2. ACCFA, Third Annual Report (for Fiscal Year 1954-1955), Manila, 1955.

3. A FaCoMa can only be established in a municipality with a minimum of 200 members and a minimum paid-up capital of P 2,000.

4. The landlords in turn have often reverted to "obstructionist tactics" hoping to discourage the FaCoMa venture. They fear to lose the control over the tenant that they hold as his sole source of credit. Some have attempted to discourage their illiterate tenants from affiliating with FaCoMa by threatening to reverse the 70-30-share basis, although in most cases this is contrary to R.A. 1199c

Hence, to the extent that the Leadership has failed to highlight the primary value of cooperative enterprise, it has undoubtedly contributed to ACCFA's complaint that: "Cooperatives have been and are being organized with no other purpose than to get loans from the ACCFA... (a) situation obviously not healthy for the sound development of cooperatives."¹

As a counterpart to its local activities, the Federation maintained a close collaboration with the ACCFA's former chief administrator, Col. Osmundo Mondonedo.² Oftentimes the FFF President referred an FFF leader (usually a lawyer) to Mondonedo for appointment, without remuneration, as an ACCFA special investigator - a practice apparently continued with Mondonedo's successor. The "special investigator" is authorized to inquire into all alleged anomalies³ reported to him by FFF FaCoMa members in any municipality and to check the functioning of the Co-op; all his findings are directed to the ACCFA chief. The Federation, in several instances, has been instrumental in replacing incompetent or dishonest FaCoMa managers - usually with FFF men. This is normally accomplished by bringing pressure to bear among top ACCFA officials rather than through local FaCoMa members who supposedly select the manager.⁴ In fact, the authority of the Federation in some areas, e. g. Concepcion, Tarlac, is great enough to be a determining factor in the "hiring and firing" of FaCoMa officials.

1. ACCFA, Policy and Procedures on Organization of FaCoMas (Circular 1-A, Series of 1955-1956), p. 2.

2. Coli Mondonedo was openly in favor of extending as much help as possible to the Federation in pursuance of its "infiltration policy" and other requests it might have. (This was manifest during a personal conference between Mondonedo and Montemayor attended by the writer.) However, after RM's death he resigned to run for Congress and Ernesto Jimines, former manager of the Central Cooperative Exchange, took his place. It remains to be seen whether or not the FFF will be able to establish so close a liaison with the new administrator.

3. One problem, related by Mondonedo at a meeting with FFF officials (attended by writer) pertains to the fact that the FaCoMa management, in securing buyers for the farmer's rice, can make as much profit at the farmer's expense as does any middleman or the landlords; if FaCoMa members, may secure the larger part of FaCoMa loans and reloan the money to tenants at a profit.

4. Mondonedo, or his successor, is empowered to replace incompetent managers under R.A. 821 (See Sec 18). In one case a peculiar situation obtained; the FFF attorney appointed to investigate a local FaCoMa was likewise investigating his father, a landed member of that FaCoMa's Board of Directors. His father was removed.

Furthermore, the National Federation, on behalf of its members in a particular municipality, may petition ACCFA for the establishment of a FaCoMa under local FFF direction; or it may ask for intervention to expedite an individual FreeFarmer's application for FaCoMa membership or for a loan. Such requests are usually granted.

Notwithstanding the concessions won, the Federation asserts that in the long run it can supplement the FaCoMas in some important respects. For example, ACCFA does not admit sugar tenants to its local associations¹ - the FFF makes no such discrimination; nor do many tenants wish to join the same association to which their landlords may belong² - FFF Co-ops are exclusive to tenants and small landholders; and, in many towns one cooperative is not adequate to attend to the needs of the farming populace - the FFF store in Alaminos exists together with a FaCoMa. Furthermore, the FaCoMa is limited to the marketing and financing sphere, whereas the FFF cooperative movement is theoretically to embrace a host of other activities. Even in its credit program, the FFF points out, the FaCoMa cannot answer wholly to the requisites of the farmers for two additional reasons; (1) Not all tenants can sign a loan agreement as their productive capacity is too small;³ and, (2) the quota is too limited to fulfill the many loan requirements of the farmer⁴. However, the FFF for its part has been unable to satisfactorily demonstrate that a Philippine cooperative movement, instigated without substantial outside assistance (as from the government), will have any chance of success.⁵

1. According to Mondonado the sugar bloc is too powerful to fight with ACCFA's limited resources.

2. Although ACCFA aims to help the small farmer primarily, any bonafide agricultural producer - a landlord or tenant - can be a member of a FaCoMa. (See R.A. 821, Section 12(a).) It is possible, therefore, for landed interests to have a controlling voice in the affairs of the FaCoMa which many actually do.

3. The credit extended to small farmers through ACCFA is based upon their anticipated productive capacity although: "The ability of such a borrower to provide security in the form of land or other tangible securities should not be the primary deciding factor in approving or disapproving a loan. Instead, the size of the loan should be predicated upon his production." (See R.A. 82., Section 13.)

4. The amount of the loan requested by each individual must not exceed ₱2,000, but interest rates are only 8 per cent. Loans are of five types: crop or production; farm improvement; commodity; facility; and merchandising.

5. In private, however, the National FFF leaders tentatively admit that perhaps cooperative enterprise in the Philippines on a private scale will never prove feasible nor enduring until the Filipino farmer owns his own land.

In any case prospects for a large scale FFF cooperative movement or even a limited one are extremely bleak despite the wide and favorable publicity given the movement by the FFF Leadership and the imposing paper plans for its extension. The FFF in its present circumstances has neither the resources nor administrative skill¹ to carry through any enterprise of this sort. Unquestionably, the Federation's policy of close collaboration with and active initiative in the FaCoMa movements is, for the time being at least, tactically sound in view of the expansive operative that ACCFA has embarked on and which the Federation could hardly hope to duplicate.²

Developmental Projects

The Federation has proposed to improve the conditions of the rural populace by a variety of measures theoretically designed to supplement or extend government services in the barrios which - despite the Magsaysay regime's efforts to the contrary - have been considerably retarded.³ Such work is ostensibly part of the Federation's much promulgated aim of "bringing the government and the people closer to each other." In pursuit of this objective the Federation is to play the essential role of a so-called "go-between":

Among the biggest problems in any government effort to serve the people is the difficulty...of reaching

1. Supposedly the Production and/or Economic Department of the National Executive Office is to handle the affairs of the cooperatives. However, the Department in this field of activity is inoperative for there are none who have sufficient training in cooperatives to competently handle such matters. Only Fri Mauri is actually equipped and hence he oversees the cooperatives to the extent that he can, considering that he has directed his efforts to various other projects of more consequence. The FFF Cooperatives have, on the whole, received little real support or assistance from the National Office.

2. Some 280 farmers' co-ops have been established representing 6,363 barrios in 349 municipalities in 42 provinces and with a combined authorized capital of ₱15,963,775 (₱2,462,451.82 paid-up). Loans extended during FY 1954-55 totaled ₱32,637,531.82. (See ACCFA, Third Annual Report (for Fiscal Year 1954-1955).)

3. Robert T. MacMillan & Generoso F. Rivera in An Economic and Social Survey of Rural Households in Central Luzon, attribute this lag to the following: (1) inadequate roads and transportation facilities; (2) shortage of trained personnel; (3) inadequate funds; (4) aversion of public officials to travel in the barrios; and, (5) assumed social inferiority of the barrio people. It has as well resulted from the poorly organized administrative apparatus.

those who need the service most...At present our government is beset with so many problems and suffers from so many limitations that it simply cannot reach the people by its own resources.^c

The farmers must have an organization that will bridge the gap between the government and the individual.^c Through this organization.^c government aid shall be channeled to the (peasant).^b

Thus in approximately two and one-half years of operation, the FFF, acting as an intermediary, brought about the installation of twenty-three artesian wells, primarily in the Central Luzon provinces; some ten prefabricated school houses were erected with the cooperation of the Engineering Corps of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The FFF has likewise been instrumental in the construction and improvement of a number of barrio roads and irrigation systems.² But, as this enumeration should indicate, the accomplishments of the FFF in this area of rural development have had a negligible impact in alleviating conditions in the rural Philippines.³

However, perhaps the significance of these efforts rests not so much in the end results as in the method of approach and as such merits consideration. In obtaining the above mentioned facilities, the National Federation, on the request of its provincial associations, attempts to intercede directly with the government agencies concerned.⁴ This is considered necessary because projects such as public works are primarily under the jurisdiction of the national government and field agents are responsible to their Manila departments. However, such intervention rarely proves effective owing to bureaucratic red

1. FFF, "The Importance of Land Settlement" (Draft of an unpublished brochure), ppc 4-5.

2. FFF, Report on Operations (from October, 1953 to June, 1956), p. 5.^c

3. However, activities along these lines can be more properly viewed as a major feature of the Federation's membership campaign for the peasant is more readily induced to join the movement if he is given the prospect of obtaining thereby substantial barrio improvements.^c But a situation has consequently been created in which the organization - severely handicapped by its lack of personnel, funds and experience - is confronted by a multiplicity of pressing demands from the rank and file for housing, irrigation etc. all of which it can ill afford to renege, yet cannot hope to meet.

4. Administrative staff members of the FFF National Office generally handle the routine matters attached to this procedure and may appear in the government agency armed with a personal letter of authorization from Montemayor.^c But in most instances Montemayor himself or one of the National Executive officers personally contact the head bureaucrat.

tape and procrastination and the fact that the FFF National Office - understaffed and overworked as it is - cannot maintain a persistent follow-up of its projects. Consequently, the FFF has tended to by-pass these bureaus in a direct appeal to the Presidential Office in Malacanang.¹ Ordinarily a memorandum is submitted to the President, personally or through one of his aides, irrespective of its importance; it may pertain to a fertilizer allocation, a school house or an artesian well.² Or on the other hand, the Federation may send a delegation of several hundred farmers to the Palace with a personal petition for the President - this manner of representation being one of the hallmarks of the "Magsaysay era of the common man" and a precedent which the present executives find difficulty in disregarding.

With the late President Magsaysay,³ who was all too contemptuous of bureaucratic procedures, the FFF found this course of action to be a relatively simple and successful one. The majority of FFF recommendations, countersigned by RM with typical dispatch, went directly to the appropriate office where they received prompt attention regardless of whether or not more urgent issues should have been given priority. If for some reason the bureau is still dilatory in accomplishing the request, another memorandum may be submitted or a complaint against the bureau chief registered with Malacanang.

In accounting for the ease with which the Federation was able to intercede directly with President Magsaysay, several factors must be taken into consideration. For one, the general tenor of Magsaysay's rule was such as to purposely encourage a close identification between the peasantry and the regime. Regarding the confidence of the people as essential to the success of his administration, he was careful to cultivate the concept

1. It should be noted at this point that, although the President's budget doesn't include the major public works appropriations, he nevertheless has considerable discretion in determining the order in which funds are released. (See Stone, et al., Public Administration in The Philippines, p. 176.)

2. A recommendation of a FFF memorandum might read like this one: "The Federation of Free Farmers is aware of His Excellency's policy to encourage parents to send their children to school. It, therefore, recommends to His Excellency, President Magsaysay, that he order the immediate repair of the home economics building in barrio Dila-Dila, Sta. Rita, Pampanga." (Memorandum submitted to President Magsaysay by Teodoro Sison, Head of Social Dept. over signature of Montemayor, November 10, 1955.) Though of course not all memoranda submitted to the President have been of such little consequence, nonetheless, this is indicative of the type of problems foisted upon a too willing chief executive.

3. President Magsaysay was killed in an airplane crash in March of 1957.

of a "peoples' government" with a "President of the people" at its helm. As some have termed it, he was attempting to "humanize the presidency." Indeed, throughout his incumbency, RM publicly announced his determination to review and correct all problems and complaints of the peasantry - personally if need be. He was noted for his impatience with any apathy or incompetency on the part of his administrators in carrying out this pledge. So that his practice was usually to "run things" himself, though as a result he overly concerned himself with administrative details that were often of minor significance. An account sympathetic to RM described this quality as follows: "Nothing infuriates Magsaysay more than to learn that some humble citizens consider him inaccessible. He is often heard to shout at his aides and his appointment secretaries when work reaches him of such a complaint."¹ Therefore, the peasant was always welcome in Malacanang - "The Peoples' Palace" - and there he could feel reasonably certain of being heard.

Under these circumstances it is not difficult to see why the FFF was able to gain such ready access to the Chief Executive. The Federation's first formal introduction to Magsaysay was arranged with the help of Antonio Diaz, the President's nephew. Through the latter's intercession Montemayor was able to be present at one of RM's so-called "breakfast conferences." At this time the FFF President was given the opportunity to present the cause of the Federation and to request support. No doubt he emphasized the Federation's willingness and ability to assist in realizing RM's agrarian program and hence to reinforce government popularity on the local level. At any rate, Montemayor was able to win the support of the President for the latter offered to subsidize the organization for P1,000 per month - amount drawn from the Peace and Amelioration Fund until mid-1956 when this fund was exhausted. RM later aided the FFF in printing and distributing vernacular versions of the new tenancy law as well.

After gaining this initial advantage, the FFF continued to strengthen and extend its liaison with the Executive. Diaz remained for a time the principal go-between; he carried the majority of the organization's problems and requests to RM for solution and also obtained transportation vehicles (old model jeeps) for the FFF leaders. Profitable contacts were also established with such central figures as Joe Ensaldo - RM's

1. Carlos Romulo and Marvin Gray, The Magsaysay Story, p. 245. This book is a popularized version of the Magsaysay regime and makes no attempt to be objective. However, the above quotation can be said to reflect without great inaccuracy the general atmosphere prevailing in Malacanang. The writer has heard some of Magsaysay's staff express the same opinion as well.

appointments secretary and the key to the Presidential inner-sanctum,¹ Pat Garcia² - the favorite Presidential Aide, Mariano Yenke, Jr - Assistant Executive Secretary and former classmate of Montemayor, Genaro Magsaysay - brother of RM and also Montemayor's former classmate, and other less prominent persons. Likewise FFF delegations frequented Malacanang and an increased number of FFF petitions and reports found their way to RM's desk. However, in this connection the fact should not be overlooked that the majority of those petitions and projects presented by the FFF to Magsaysay for approval or expedition were of relatively little consequence. Though undoubtedly they caused minor inconveniences to the agencies concerned and perhaps roused the ire of some bureaucrats, they generally involved no far reaching political decisions and could, therefore, be granted with relative impunity.

Nonetheless the receptivity of Magsaysay to FFF representations unquestionably raised the prestige of the Leadership in many quarters and it increased the popularity of the organization, noticeably on the local level. The Leadership could now claim the President's blessing for the movement and hence could assure the rank and file of the FFF's national standing. However, in relying unduly on presidential patronage, the Federation has often failed to cultivate more lasting and useful connections in other circles where it must now with difficulty do business. Since the death of Magsaysay and the change of administration, the Federation has not been so readily accommodated by the Malacanang hierarchy. This is only a forecast of the obstacles it can be assured of encountering - especially if it should be forced to deal with a regime antagonistic to the cause of the peasantry.

1. Joe Ensaldo saw that FFF memoranda reached the President as rapidly as possible; and that FFF leaders obtained personal audiences with him when he was most receptive. This was infrequent, however, and the leaders primarily gained the President's ear when accompanying farmer delegations to Malacanang. To alleviate the confusion and work attending a continual stream of visitors, farmer delegations and "the curious" were finally restricted to seeing the President "by appointment only." It was Ensaldo who also arranged these appointments for the FFF. Ensaldo's willingness to help the FFF was largely due to the fact that the FFF had received at least the nominal support and approval of the President. Hence its representations were not apt to cause irritation to the Chief Executive with unfavorable repercussions for his staff. Ensaldo, however, gained somewhat in the relationship; in return for his aid the FFF has mediated on his behalf in tenancy cases though Ensaldo is a landlord. But aside from this no other special benefits were offered the secretary.

2. Pat Garcia arranged for several free passes on Army transports for FFF organizers and leaders in the field. However, no settlement or prior understanding had been reached privately between Garcia and the FFF.

Also relevant is the fact that the National Leadership, in taking the sole responsibility for interpreting and advancing the interests of the members and in turn determining unilaterally which of those interests should receive priority, has thereby removed decision-making from Local FFF units. Likewise the Free Farmers have not been permitted full participation in the organization. Yet to function as a mass agrarian organization the FFF should be given the maximum opportunity and encouragement for developing a strong popular will among its rank and file. Likewise its local leaders must be able to give clear and forceful voice to this will in such a manner as to gain the notice of Congressional political leaders attached to local constituencies. But this will hardly be possible if the National FFF insists on operating almost exclusively through the Office of the President and continues to exclude the Locals from the national sphere of FFF activity.

Secondary Services

Other benefits extended to FFF members include free treatment in any government-hospital; though owing to the insufficiency of drugs and other medical facilities in the provinces, the majority of FFF patients are referred to institutions in Manila such as the Philippine General Hospital. Such hospitalization is obtained through the Office of the President of the Philippines which may also recommend immediate operation in emergency cases - the government bearing the expense. The FFF likewise maintains a blood bank, held by the Philippine National Red Cross for FFF patients; this was the result of a mass blood donation by FFF members. In the long run the organization hopes to create FFF Rural Health Centers in each province through the aid of the Bureau of Health, but so far this is only a tentative plan and one among many such schemes. Such FFF medical services, which afford only a minimal advantage to the peasant, obviously do not bulk very large in the whole of FFF activity. They are, nonetheless, intended to supplement to some extent the services of the municipal doctor and his staff who function almost exclusively in the poblacion, rarely attending to the barrio population. A similar situation also obtains in the case of Social Welfare Administration relief goods which, in a number of instances, have reached the barrio inhabitants for whom they were originally intended only through the efforts of the National Federation.

Brief mention might also be made of other non-governmental sources of charitable benefits. As a member of "Seeds for Democracy" the FFF acts as a distributive agency for this

establishment¹ Most recently the national FFF officials were able to secure a large portion of a million-peso shipment of surplus goods from the United States which was allocated for the Catholic Relief Service and consigned to the Catholic Welfare Organization of the Philippines for disbursement to the needy. It was solely due to the continued intervention of the national FFF leaders that this shipment was exempted from customs duties and taxes and that free overland freight to the local points of distribution was obtained.

In reviewing these various FFF undertakings, one might well question the extent to which they are applicable to the Federation's long range goal of land to the tiller. This is evidently a question which the FFF leaders have not analyzed with an eye to either realities or potentialities for had they done so their answer would most likely be in the negative. On the whole it would seem that their concern is largely directed towards the propagandistic value of the project or activity. Yet this tendency to dissipate its meager resources in a multitude of unrelated and often inconsequential programs as well as to take on tasks which are beyond its range or potential to complete with any degree of success has been a persistent characteristic of the National Federation.

Educational Program

The Federation, holding to the principle that society can function democratically only with an enlightened citizenry, has planned an ambitious program of education for its 50,000 members. Designed not only to acquaint the peasant with his rights and obligations under law, but also with basic facts of sanitation, improved agricultural production etc., the FFF program is further geared to bridge the communicative gap between the government and the barrio populace. To accomplish this multiple goal the Federation has engaged in a variety of activities.

Translations

In the first year of operation the FFF printed several thousand copies of the Minimum Wage Law translated into Pampango as well as a simplified version of the "Old Tenancy Law." With the passage of R. A. 1199, the Federation undertook a full translation of the law into the Pampango, Ilocano and Tagalog dialects.

1. Seeds for Democracy is a joint, private and civic service organization under United States auspices. It distributes seed packets donated by American groups to its various members in many countries. It espouses the doctrine of individual self-help and non-partisan distribution. All members must be organizations rather than individuals and must be national in scope. The head of the FFF Social Department is the FFF representative on the Committee for the Seeds of Democracy.

and, in conjunction with President Magsaysay, printed and distributed to its membership over 80,000 copies, thus being the first organization to take this initiative. Federation members also receive, through the FFF Education Department, diversified literature including: pamphlets requisitioned from various government agencies covering such topics as production methods, sanitation, pest control, hog and poultry raising etc.; numerous brochures from civic and religious groups such as the "Quadragesimo Anno" translated into Tagalog by the FFF; and other articles, mainly on agriculture, obtained from foreign sources. Various FFF publications, largely propagandistic in content, such as its Manifesto and Montemayor's "The Filipino Farmer," are also widely circulated. On the whole, the bulk of instructive materials which the Federation has been responsible for printing and distributing is a reasonably impressive one given the limitations of its National Office. The FFF, as an informational media, has unquestionably performed a useful, though hardly major, service for the Philippine Government as well as for its membership.

Newspaper

The Federation has, furthermore, planned for a vernacular and English newspaper to be published in Manila with nationwide circulation. At one time the National Office did put out 10,000 copies of a three-page, mimeographed news sheet entitled "Solidaridad" which was translated into three dialects. But, due to insufficiency of funds and lack of a full-time editorial staff, the paper had to be discontinued. The most recent proposals call for the publication of a barrio paper, "The Free Farmer" which is to eventually become "the newspaper organ of the farming population of the Philippines."¹ In fact its first edition, albeit a very circumscribed one, went to press as of October, 1957.

1. Preliminary plan of "The Free Farmer," 1956.

The specific long range objectives of "The Free Farmer," as outlined by Montemayor, are to: (1) inform the membership of national and local issues and events abroad; (2) offer an effective voice for the farmers; (3) provide useful information on such matters as modern agricultural production, community development etc.; (4) explain the rural policies and programs of the government; (5) acquaint the masses with the real nature of democracy and communism, particularly in the light of current events; and (6) publicize the advantages of FFF affiliation. Publications are to be in six editions: Tagalog, Ilocano, Visayan-Cebuano, Visayan-Ilongo, Pampango, and English.¹

In view of the fact that there are few, if any, barrio newspapers in the vernacular except for the mimeographed "Titis" of the Communists, "The Free Farmer" could potentially supply the barrio populace with a vitally needed source of accurate and comprehensible news at the same time that it could accomplish its propagandistic objective. Such a newspaper, if properly edited, could conceivably be an instrument for both forming and giving expression to public opinion which is as yet only that of the educated minority. However, the success of the newspaper will greatly depend on the possibility of securing the wherewithal for its publication, and enlisting a competent staff.² Presently the position of editor has been assigned to the National President though he is already overburdened with a multitude of other duties; and the other National officials are in no better a position to handle a large-scale newspaper." In the light of past difficulties with "Solidaridad," funds and particularly personnel are likely to be the greatest obstacles to publishing "The Free Farmer" for any prolonged period and with any degree of effectiveness.

Radio

Along the lines of radio, the Federation has had little success. A Tagalog program, "The Barrio Clinic," Co-sponsored by the FFF and the Catholic-fostered Columbian Farmers, was underway in 1956 with the help of the Asia Foundation and the Agricultural Tenancy Commission. But the Federation, since it had no officials free to participate at the time, was unable to continue its part of the project. However, for a six-month period the Civil Defense Administration allowed the Federation a weekly, half-hour broadcast which was mainly dedicated to FFF publicity; barrio leaders were also invited to discuss local news items. Little else has been promoted in a rather vital sphere of propaganda and public relations.

1. The maximum potential circulation of "The Free Farmer" has been estimated at a possible 2,500,000 for future printing; now the initial peak is set at 12,000 with monthly increases. Copies are to be distributed to provincial and municipal officials for further disbursement to the members.

2. The Asia Foundation thus far has been the most likely source of funds and it has evinced great interest in the paper.

Mass Meetings

In contrast to such secondary ventures is the mass meeting, one of the more imaginative of FFF education schemes and one which has proved most successful in bringing the government to the people.¹ These FFF sponsored assemblies, held in the poblacion or, more rarely, in the barrio, generally draw a large attendance which is indicative of the farmer's response to this method of FFF promotion.² Likewise government officials, invited by the Federation as guest speakers, are invariably present. During a meeting the following type of informational program is ordinarily presented: a representative of the Court of Agrarian Relations or, more frequently, the Agricultural Tenancy Commission will explain to the assembled farmers the provisions of the agricultural tenancy law and their legal rights and obligations as well as the services available to them through the agencies; a member of the Judge Advocate General's Office will speak on the need of conciliation and/or arbitration in tenancy disputes and the Army's part in building the basis for economic prosperity among the rural classes; an ACCFA spokesman will discuss the cooperative financing of rice share tenants through local FaCoMas; and an official of the National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Administration will describe the means of obtaining new lands under this program. Lastly, the FFF leaders will tell the farmers of the national and local activities of the Federation and the overall progress of the movement. Frequently the Federation is able to requisition the mobile movie units of the Public Affairs Office of the AFP, the Agricultural Extension Service or the United States Information Service; the films shown mainly concern agriculture.³

After hours of speech-making and lecturing, the meeting is always concluded with an open forum during which the farmers can present their problems and address any questions or complaints to FFF and government officials. This not only allows the farmer to air his grievances, but it also gives him a sense of participation, however fictional, in the affairs of the FFF association and an identification with other Free Farmers. Likewise his contact with the representatives of these government agencies helps to erase the long-held belief that he has been totally neglected by Manila. As an index of this, barrio requests for government facilities to boost local developmental projects have appreciably increased in areas where the FFF has been most active. If these services can be adequately provided the farmer without too much delay and difficulty, his keener awareness of the potentialities for self-advancement can become a positive force for rural progress. However, both the government and the Federation stand liable for any expectation which may not, or cannot, be met.

1. As indicated previously this may likewise serve as an organizational meeting for purposes of membership recruitment.

2. As of August 3, 1956, the FFF claims some 1,000 meetings have been held under its auspices.

3. Unfortunately a number of movies, especially those of the USIS, are on an English sound track and, rather than being educational, they are more often merely entertaining.

Supplementary to the mass meeting is the barrio "study club" - an adjunct to the FFF "Rosary movement" under Fr. Mauri's guidance.¹ The club leaders introduce the farmers to the best method of handling tenancy law, the procedures for attaining FaCoMa membership and other topics similar to, but more detailed than those covered in the mass meeting. Moreover it is during small gatherings such as this that FFF farmers receive a full dosage of self-help principles calculated to offset the prevailing conception of the FFF as a predominantly welfare agency. As a result of this attitude the National Office has found itself inundated with petitions for help and advice beyond its capacity to satisfy.

In spite of such activities there has been, moreover, a stagnation and demoralization of many FFF Locals. Several factors have contributed to this. Originally the FFF concentrated all effort in a single area where tenancy was most acute and, capitalizing on the more immediate issues such as unlawful ejection, it greatly enlarged its membership. However, once the situation improved through FFF action, the peasant lost his original motive for joining the movement and with it any incentive to sustain the vigor of this Local. Likewise, to the nonmembers were offered no immediate inducement to affiliate. This general indifference has also been furthered by the Federation's policy of indiscriminate "handouts," and its lax enforcement of regulations as well as its false estimation that FFF members have neither the capacity nor the experience to manage their own affairs. Inevitably, the individual FFF member has looked only to the National FFF for solution of all problems without feeling any obligation to fulfill his duties as a member. He has consequently little real stake in his association having neither paid dues nor participated in its deliberations. Although the FFF is now attempting a reversal through its mass indoctrination campaigns and through a policy of simultaneous expansion in all provinces, nonetheless certain elitist concepts of "leading the masses to a better future" remain and find their way into any discussion or formulation of new policy. Hence in all likelihood a degree of dependency on the National Federation will continue to be fostered.

However, one encouraging offshoot of the new emphasis on self-help has been a barrio agricultural program co-authored by the Federation and the Bureau of Agricultural Extension. An extension agent is sent to a barrio where he contacts, with the assistance of local FFF leaders, a group of enterprising farmers. After six weeks of instruction in the masagana system of rice planting, piggery, pest control and allied subjects, those farmers who qualify receive a "diploma" from the BAE. They are then expected to take the initiative in teaching and promoting similar methods of progressive farming. This enterprise, only recently

1. The FFF Rosary movement, seen by the Leadership as one method of unifying the membership, is conducted on the barrio level. The Rosary is prayed by alternating groups in the barrio - each night in a different house. The leaders of each Rosary Unit form the study club immediately following the Rosary meeting for which approximately 15 families have gathered.

instigated and every limited in scope, has proven relatively successful¹ and its promoters are convinced that it can provide a model for similar programs in other areas.

Leadership Training

Of critical importance to the achievement of the Federation's long range objectives is the adequate training and thorough indoctrination of local leadership drawn from the ranks of the peasantry. Yet this all important facet of the FFF's educational campaign received little of the attention it merited particularly in the earlier phase of the Free Farmers movement (a pertinent commentary on the National officialdom's approach to agrarian unionism). The only effort exerted along this line - and a rather feeble one at that - was the Philippine Agrarian Labor School (PALS). It was established in Manila during the fall of 1954 with the assistance of Eleuterio Adevos, then Secretary of Labor and a good friend of the FFF, and given minimal support from the Labor Education Center of the University of the Philippines. The School's specific purpose was to prepare prospective leaders from the provinces for the responsibilities of organizing and guiding the rural populace.² But due to the inefficient management of the school, the disinterest of its instructors and the very poor record of attendance, it soon collapsed. Out of the sixty students enrolled, of whom the majority were city residents, a mere six "graduated" after five months of intermittent instruction; none returned to the barrios. However, the National Leadership has now become far more conscious of the consequence of such projects and plans for the revival of the PALS on a more comprehensive scale are in the process of formulation.³ Meanwhile the FFF is conducting leadership training schools for FFF farmers in some six Central Luzon towns. Financially supported by the Asia Foundation, these school hold classes every Sunday with each course lasting twelve Sundays.⁴

Potentially the FFF schools could contribute much towards forming the type of dynamic, rural leadership that the over-centralized, lawyer-led

1. Letter from FFF to writer, September 20, 1958.

2. PALS lecturers were to be National FFF leaders and officials from such agencies as the Agricultural Tenancy Commission, the Department of Justice, the International Cooperation Administration. The curriculum included principles of rural organization, the process of crop-liquidation, the tenancy and minimum wage laws.

3. In financing the School the Federation looks to the Asia Foundation for help as well as to the Catholic Church. A subsidy plan is, in fact, being worked out between the Federation and the Asia Foundation. Trainees will be drawn exclusively from the farming classes on a selective basis; they will be given transportation cost and housed in Manila where they will undergo exhaustive inculcation. On their return to the provinces their task will be to establish local educational centers patterned on the national. Moreover, there is the prospect that these local leaders will eventually serve on the barrio council in their locales which became elective in 1956.

4. Letter from FFF to writer, August 12, 1958.

Federation stands so in need of. Indeed without such leaders, it is highly improbable that the FFF will ever develop into a successfully functioning mass organization. Yet paradoxically enough, the many perversities that have crippled or eventually cancelled the most promising of FFF schemes are a direct outgrowth of this very centralization. It will, therefore, take considerable effort on the part of the national leaders to sustain and expand these educational projects.

Wholly secondary methods of education recently to put in practice are conventions for provincial leaders and seminars for municipal leaders during which common problems are discussed and solutions suggested.¹ Informal training is also afforded new local leaders who are taken on educational-organizational campaigns in the barrios. They likewise review local projects, familiarize themselves with the techniques employed and confer with other leaders. Of more consequence is the FFF overseas scholarship program; two labor trainee grants from the International Cooperation Administration enabled Esguerra and another FFF official to visit the United States in order to examine the American systems of unionization;² four leaders were sent to the Centre for Advanced Study and Training (for rural leadership) in Colombo, Ceylon and two others went to the Centre's project for Student Administration conducted by the World Assembly of Youth; and the National Secretary made a six-months observation tour in Australia under the Colombo Plan. Leaders have also traveled in Japan and Taiwan in order to review the accomplishments of the land reform programs there. The goal is to eventually make available to the barrio leaders similar overseas opportunities suited to their academic level.

A counterpart to these various programs are the youth projects. One is conducted on the barrio level for youth of 16-25 years of age who are selected with the aid of the parish priest and trained by FFF instructors in advanced agricultural techniques, community development, practical leadership, moral character etc. The Federation has, in addition, affiliated youth organizations, the Junior Associations of Free Farmers, which are established primarily in the high schools and colleges of Manila. These groups solicit and distribute to the barrio farmers relief goods as well as reading matter, athletic equipment etc. and have also assisted in translating informational materials into the vernacular. Each school constitutes a chapter and together they are under the Student Participation Department of the Federation. In this way the FFF hopes to enlist the interest and eventual allegiance of the students. Many of the youth now working with the National Federation and gradually stepping into positions of authority are those who were contacted through these Junior Associations.

1. Several of these conventions were held in Central Luzon in 1956 and their success has made them official policy.

2. Esguerra visited the CIO and AFL offices in Washington, D.C. and was present at the merger convention. One of the organizational techniques he brought back with him was the stamp system for dues collection now being used by the Federation. Esguerra like other FFF overseas scholars, spent considerable time propagandizing for the FFF, establishing contacts and seeking scholarship privileges for the FFF staff as well as financial help.

Defense of FFF Members: Agrarian Peace

Despite much talk, innumerable plans and a flurry of activity with regard to cooperatives, rural development projects, educational and informational campaigns, the Federation cannot be credited with any substantial contribution towards rural amelioration. Nor has it thereby proved its viability as a mass agrarian organization. It has been rather in the legal field that the Federation can, with more justification, claim a measure of accomplishment as "a weapon of common defense" for its members, this function in turn being directly related to its "promotion of peace between landlords and tenants."

Legal Aid and Conciliation

As the FFF claims:

Legal aid has been one of the most immediate services extended by the Federation to its members. Until now, it has been the principal activity of the Federation. This is so, not because legal aid is a basic remedy to the problems of the farmers, but because it is their most immediate need and it is a specific service which the FFF has been able to render immediately.¹

The National Office of the Federation maintains a Legal Department which handles legal matters of national scope and a few of the more important cases referred to it by the provincial associations; it engages in legal research as well which mainly involves a study of Congressional enactments such as the tenancy law. However, the real burden of legal work is carried by the provincial legal counsels. Attached to each provincial office are one or more "bona fide lawyers" appointed by the National Executive Office on the recommendation of its President, Montemayor. As previously indicated, the Legal Counsel may combine his functions with those of an organizer or local president despite the fact that the spate of urgent tenancy cases within one month may demand some three court appearances per day if no backlog is to accumulate.²

These Counsels provide the individual Free Farmer with "gratuitous legal services which include advice on a wide variety of issues as well as actual litigation. Nor is any FFF lawyer, as decreed by the 1956 Executive meeting, permitted to solicit or accept any "donations" for legal aid given as this is contrary to "that spirit which has kept the FFF moving for over two years." Too, all cases presented to the provincial lawyer must generally be submitted to the National Legal Department for recording; the National Legal Counsel may proffer advice to the lawyer depending on the seriousness of the dispute. He will actively intervene,

1. FFF, Report on Operations (from October, 1953 to June, 1956), p. 4.

2. Though the lawyer is supposedly to coordinate his efforts with the Provincial President to whom he is subject, he actually exercises as much or more power than the Provincial President in many instances.

however, if the case - usually decided by a Justice of the Peace - should be appealed to a higher court.

If a dispute arises between a FFF member and a landlord in any locale, the Counsel for the province normally adheres to the following procedure: a group composed of a priest, the FFF lawyer, the president of the FFF unit and ordinarily the tenant involved visit the landlord where both sides are aired and an attempt made, through conciliation, to resolve their differences; if the landlord remains obdurate the Agricultural Tenancy Commission is notified and its representative will try further to amend the dispute; a case is subsequently filed in court only as a last resort. However, if the tenant has no right against the landlord, he is promptly told the fact and the Federation Counsel does not file a case. All that he is allowed to do is to request a concession from the landlord if the latter is willing.¹ The FFF method of conciliation has proven to be reasonably successful judging from the many law suits averted.²

The large number of tenancy disputes handled by the Federation has made it necessary to increase its legal staff considerably over the last two years so that now a Legal Counsel may employ several part-time assistants. Moreover, there has been a high rate of turnover in the legal staff for the lawyer receives no remuneration from the National Office for a work which rarely brings him acclaim and usually wins him the ire of his landed relations.³ Many have had to maintain their private law practices in addition to their work as FFF Counsel and not infrequently the two are incompatible, consequently causing dissension among the membership.⁴

The conflict situations encountered by the FFF Legal Counsel are extensive. To cite a few: conversion of tenants' landholdings to fishponds hence forcing them off the land; mechanization without authorization of the

1. Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 26.

2. For the year 1956 and including three months of 1957, 1,847 court cases were cleared through FFF legal channels according to FFF tabulations - a number claimed to rival or often surpass those processed by government agencies. And breaking this figure down into a three-month period and taking Pampanga as an example, the following proportion emerges: out of a total of 358 cases brought before the Pampanga Counsel, 139 were solved by conciliation while the remainder were litigated. (FFF, Quarterly Reports (for 1956). Also see First Quarterly Report (for 1957).)

3. The Asia Foundation does subsidize some FFF Lawyers for 100 to 150 pesos per month.

4. Miguel Lucban, son of the late Governor Lucban of Camarines Norte, is a lawyer in Daet and the unsalaried Legal Counsel of that province; he has occasionally defended landed interests against the claims of non-FFF tenants and is consequently distrusted by those who are Federation members. He would probably be replaced if there was someone to assume his duties.

government as provided by law;¹ collusion between landholders, local police and government officials to illegally exact produce and labor from tenants;² existence of usury in various forms; excessive rental above the 25 per cent set by law; ejectment without due process of law; violation of the Minimum Wage Law;³ withholding loan advances (usually rice rations) from tenants when they insist on implementing the law; illegal arrest of tenants;⁴ unjust crop liquidation. These are only a sampling of the multitude of causes for protest which the tenant daily brings to the FFF Legal Counsel.

It is pertinent to note that the FFF has developed a somewhat superficial but widely publicized rationalization for its great concentration on legal activities and perhaps, more significantly, for the all-powerful position held by the lawyer group in the FFF hierarchy. As a Farmers' organization, the FFF purports to be "the only" effective weapon of defense. It claims that only by its instrumentality can oppression be prevented, the tenant protected and his rights enforced. Agencies such as the Agricultural

1. The FFF alleges that the number of disputes have mounted as a consequence of unlawful ejectment through mechanization. Normally the landlord must petition the government should he desire to mechanize. This must receive the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture as to the suitability of the land and other considerations. These "other considerations" were pinpointed in a decision handed down by the Court of Agrarian Relations in 1956. A request for authorization to be mechanized was denied to respondent-landowner whose intention, the Court felt, was really to eject "erring tenants." Other facts to be taken into account, the Court stated, were: the possession by the landowner, or the ability to own or procure, the machineries necessary to undertake complete mechanization which should wholly supplant the manual labor of the tenant (the landowner in this case had only a D-4 Caterpillar tractor); the extent or size of holding to be mechanized; the kind of agricultural product to be raised; the real intention of the landowner in dispossessing the tenants; whether mechanization will increase the productivity of the land; the effect of the ejectment and the consequent displacement of tenants. (See David v. De Magat, CIR Case no. 310 - Tarlac, (Resolution) Sept. 3, 1956)

2. A specific instance of this, cited by the FFF, involved landholders and tenants in Pampanga. The former reportedly utilized the services of the local Chief of Police in Macabebe as well as several patrolmen and, with the express consent of the town's Vice-Mayor, exacted from the tenants advances of palay in excess of the legal amount. An "amicable settlement" was eventually reached between the two parties by the efforts of Abibuag, then President of the Pampanga FFF. However the landlord subsequently reneged and threatened to file ejectment proceedings. Hence the matter went to court. (Letter from Abibuag to Montemayor, April 11, 1955.)

3. Under this law agricultural laborers are to receive wages of ₱2.50 daily.

4. In one area seven FFF members were arrested on false charges of arson with a bail of ₱20,000 per individual. This, the FFF held, was possible because of collusion between the landlord, Justice of the Peace and the Mayor. The case was appealed. Without direct legal aid no tenant could hope to extricate himself from such a situation.

Tenancy Commission, the Court of Agrarian Relations, the Judge Advocate General's Office and others all fulfill a vital service, but they cannot, the FFF concludes, serve exclusively the interest of the peasantry. The argument upon which this conclusion is based can be traced in Montemayor's treatise, "The Filipino Farmer":

...Every government agency for the enforcement of law and the administration of justice may be likened to a fulcrum. And this fulcrum must always be set at the exact center, for in a democracy law and justice must not unduly favor anyone or any one class. But so that the fulcrum may be at the center not only in theory but also in reality, it is essential that the extremities (the tenant and the landlord) be more or less equally heavy. If...not...the fulcrum will inevitably tend toward the heavier end.¹

Montemayor then goes on to describe the disparity in the bargaining positions of the tenant - "poor, ignorant, shy and weak," and of the landlord - "rich, informed, bold and strong."² Under such circumstances the government officials supposedly tend to favor the landlord in tenancy disputes. For the latter is more facile in defending his side of the case and most capable of bringing the pressures of his rank, office and wealth to bear in his own favor. The impartiality of the government agent thus cannot be guaranteed. But if it could be this would not assure equity, Montemayor asserts. In illustration he points to the ATC.

There is now a government agency, the Agricultural Tenancy Commission, intended to inform the tenants of their rights under the law; but it has limited resources and personnel, and definitely needs the help of private organizations. Private organizations can help by translating the law into the vernacular, as the FFF has done, and by conducting meetings, rallies and seminars among the people, explaining to them their rights and duties. Besides, at most, the ATC can only explain the law and advise the tenants. It cannot enforce the tenants' rights, for ATC men cannot act as legal counsel for the tenants. Now, if tenants are made to know their rights, but are unable due to poverty, to enforce these rights, their enlightenment will only prove to be their frustration, bitterness and even hatred.³

1. Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 7.

2. Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 7.

3. FFF, Report on Operations (from October, 1953 to June, 1956) p. 2. Perhaps the Federation has no adequate statistics on ATC operations. At the end of the first nine months of ATC operation, the information division had distributed over 170,000 copies of educational pamphlets, tenancy contracts and the law itself in English and in three dialects. It had also produced one movie and had organized 214 public forums to explain the new tenancy law in 20 provinces. In 1956 the number of public forums and the volume of distributed literature increased five-fold. See Wurfel, "Philippine Agrarian Reform Under Magsaysay," Far Eastern Survey, January 1958, p. 13.

Hence the Federation, through legal representations and conciliation measures, has attempted to guarantee equality in landlord-tenant relations.

However, the Federation has tended, in the foregoing argument greatly to overlook the extent of legal aid services to tenants provided through the channels of the Court of Agrarian Relations (CAR) which deserves mention. In 1955 the Court of Industrial Relations was stripped of its jurisdiction in tenancy cases with the creation of the Court of Agrarian Relations.¹ "Established to protect the rights of landowners and tenants alike,"² the CAR conducts on-the-spot trials at low cost to the parties involved; and for tenants who cannot afford a lawyer, the Court will appoint a counsel de officio or a Public Defender. All cases are to be decided within fifteen days or less.³ CAR Commissioners, like the FFF attorneys, endeavor to effect an amicable settlement of the case out of court. The scope of CAR legal efforts can be appreciated only when one considers the tremendous backlog of tenancy cases which it inherited from the CIR. These cases totaled 2,305 of which 1,724 were disposed of by the CAR between November of 1955 and December of 1956. Superimposed on CIR cases were the newly filed CAR cases numbering 2,589; 1,124 were disposed of.⁴

Government agencies such as the ATC may need a private organization as the FFF Leadership contends, but the reverse is equally true.⁵ In fact the

1. The CAR is administratively divided into nine regional districts. Guillermo Santos, formerly Chairman of the ATC, is the Executive Judge. Eight Associate Judges handle disputes with the aid of some 24 Commissioners assigned to the regions. The former hold the rank of Judges of the Court of First Instance as does the Executive Judge and are appointed by the President with the consent of the Commission on Appointments of the Congress. The CAR is under the executive supervision of the Department of Justice.

2. (Pg. 122) CAR, "Monthly Foto Record" (undated).

3. (Pg. 122) Commissioners may also issue interlocutory orders in ejectment cases "directing the landholder to desist from ejecting the tenant from the landholding pending the final determination of the case on its merits." Interlocutory orders can also be issued, "providing for the temporary liquidation of the crop in question." (See Journal of The Court of Agrarian Relations, Vol. II, No. 2, June, 1957, p. 80.) After a case is decided the CAR will, furthermore, entertain a motion for reconsideration. The CAR likewise makes provision for an early hearing of those cases deemed of utmost urgency. ("Rules of the Court of Agrarian Relations," Rule 7, Sec. 2)

4. CAR, First Annual Report (for year ended January 15, 1957), p. 46. However, if one includes assignment orders and orders of continuance, this number would be considerably increased.

5. The ATC has served most consistently and effectually the cause of the peasantry; ATC officials are the most frequent visitors in the barrios and through their active help and counsel the tenant has been made aware of the potentialities of fighting for his legal rights. The Federation has acknowledged this and has often awarded Certificates of Merit to ATC attorneys for their outstanding work in the rural areas. This, in turn, has helped to ingratiate the FFF with the Manila ATC office. Too, the FFF Leadership has often recommended its own lawyers for ATC positions when they have so desired. Occasionally this has been granted.

FFF has continuously utilized the services of the ATC to mediate tenancy disputes involving its members, and has worked as closely as possible with the agency. A relatively stable liaison was maintained with former ATC Chairman, Guillermo Santos. His successor, Fernando Santiago has likewise cooperated fully with the FFF. Generally, complaints of individual Free Farmers are referred by the National FFF to the Manila office of the ATC which is asked to investigate the veracity of the complaints and to "intervene in the amicable, just and equitable settlement of the matter."¹ Such requests are in turn delegated by the ATC administrator to a field representative for final action. This would appear to be a rather circuitous process of settling tenancy disputes. But in view of the highly centralized nature of government agencies as well as the FFF itself, it is perhaps the most expeditious of present alternatives. At any rate, the ATC has rendered invaluable assistance to the Federation in a wide variety of tenancy cases.

Specific Cases

The following specific though widely differing cases will serve to more fully illustrate the scope and effectiveness of the Federation in defending the rights of its membership and promoting agrarian harmony.

Master Contract

One of the most publicized if not most notable achievements of the Federation in the field of agrarian relations was the Master Contract hailed by many as a "triumph in collective bargaining." A forerunner of R.A. 1199 and embodying many of its provisions, the FFF Master Contract was finally signed in Concepcion, Tarlac on May 14, 1954 after three months of negotiations between the Tarlac FFF acting on behalf of 3,000 tenants and the Ding Macabalen - a Rice Growers' Association represented by Patricio Pineda and Judge Alfredo Castro. The Contract involved 8,000 hectares of rice land. The then Undersecretary of Justice, Jesus Barrera, assisted by the Dept. of Justice legal counsel, Fernando Santiago, steered the Contract through nine stormy and protracted sessions.

The initial impetus for a rapprochement between the landlord and tenant groups was a three-pronged feud between the then incumbent Mayor of Tarlac, Nicolas Feliciano and the Federation, and between the Mayor and the 200 landlords organized into the Ding Macabalen. The result was a "modus vivendi" between the Mayor's opponents both seeking to curtail his arbitrary power among the barrio populace. However, the basis for the actual negotiations was outlined during a preliminary conference when it was generally conceded that the majority of tenancy disputes resulted not from "the bad faith of the landlords or tenants" but rather from "the vagueness of the law which resulted in misunderstanding"; and they commenced to draw up a contract which would remedy this inadequacy.

1. Letter from FFF to Fernando Santiago of the ATC, December 28, 1954.

The Master Contract - a rice share tenancy contract ¹ was, as Judge Barrera stated, "unique in the sense that it defines in minute details the obligations of the landlord and the tenants. The different phases of the work to be performed by the tenants and those to be considered as expenses have been rearranged to make (them) conform to the actual capacities of the parties to bear them as well as accepted practices and always having in mind the spirit of the law, i.e. to give the tenant his just share in the produce. Provisions are further made to cover relationships on matters not specifically provided for by law as in the case of planting by broadcasting seeds" - a provision, it might be noted, which was not included in R. A. 1199. And the Judge cites a specific example:

Under the Law, the seeds are part of the expenses shared equally. Under the Contract, "the seeds will be advanced by the landlord and will be deducted from the gross harvest. If we consider the fact that the price of palay during the planting season is much higher than the price of palay during the harvest season, the advantage of the tenant under this provision in the Contract will become very obvious.¹

The signing of the Contract was not, however, the end of all difficulties. The FFF Leadership had unilaterally qualified itself to act on what it ascertained to be the best interests of the members and it had still to convince many of the equity of the agreement. But when this was accomplished the Contract became actualized.

Although the Master Contract remained in force for only one year - its renewal rendered needless by the enactment of the new tenancy law - it was successful insofar as it marked a new stage in the relations between landlords and tenants in that area.² It disproved, the FFF acclaimed, the long held belief that "an organized agrarian movement is a bar to a better and harmonious understanding between landlords and tenants"; rather it proved that "landlords and tenants can talk across a conference table and state their problems and grievances without rancour and ill-feeling."³ Such commendation certainly is merited to some extent, but the most significant

1. Labor (Manila), May 25, 1954. Also see this issue for the full text of the Master Contract!

2. The Manila Times, May 15, 1954 hailed it as "A milestone in amicable and cordial landlord-tenant relationships throughout the country." It was, the paper stated: "The first of its kind in the Philippines; it is expected to set the pattern of relationships between landlords and tenants throughout the country." The Chronicle, May 15, 1954 called it "A new Chapter in Philippine landlord-tenant relations!..which was to have far-reaching effects in the solution of tenancy problems in Central Luzon and elsewhere in the country." The Manila Bulletin, May 15, 1954 was more restrained in its praise, terming the Contract "...an eye-opening tenancy contract which foreshadows the eventual shattering of feudalistic bonds between landowners and tillers in this country."

3. FFF, "Background of the Master Contract" (unpublished article, 1954).

and far-reaching implication of the Contract was perhaps best epitomized in an editorial comment of The Manila Times which stated:

The document seems specially historic in that it marks the revival of the legitimate agrarian union under responsible rather than radical leadership. The new tenancy accord has been made possible by the fact that the farmers were able to organize under responsible leadership.

The article ended with a pertinent reference to the fact the Contract was a particular achievement in view of the "generally suspicious attitude of law enforcement authorities towards agrarian unions."¹

Capas Mines Dispute

While the Master Contract remained for all purposes a purely localized affair involving strictly agrarian relations, the more recent Capas Mines case embroiled the Federation of Free Farmers in an "international issue." The Mines dispute of 1956 was sparked by a relatively minor incident which occurred within the 64,000 hectare U.S. Clark Field-Fort Stotsenberg military reservation. Reputedly under the direction of Thelmo Escalona, a group of farmer-miners - among them FFF members - had attempted to haul manganese ore from a mining prospect located at Bueno Hill in Capas, Tarlac within the air base without the necessary permit for such operations.² They were consequently detained by U. S. security guards who also confiscated the ore, reportedly at gun-point.³ Escalona, Legal Counsel and

1. The Manila Times, May 16, 1954. Yet, contrary to expectations, contracts of this sort were never negotiated in other areas. In 1956 one effort was made, however, to duplicate the Master Contract in sugar tenancy when a conference was held in Tarlac between the Tarlac FFF represented by Thelmo Escalona, its Legal Counsel, and the Sugar Planters' Association; Governor Lugay presided. Marked by mutual hostility and sometimes bitter debate, the meeting accomplished nothing; and no further attempt to regulate the relations between landlords and tenants on sugar producing estates has been made by these two groups. (Conference between Tarlac FFF and Sugar Planters' Association, Tarlac, January 9, 1956. Attended by writer.)

2. Under the 1947 Philippine-American military bases agreement, the exploitation of all minerals within the areas covered by the pact must have the consent of the United States. (PI-US Military Bases Agreement, Article 24.) The usual procedure is to submit a mining application to the Bureau of Mines for processing; once this is completed the Department of Foreign Affairs requests the U.S. government, through its Manila Embassy, for final authorization.

3. (Pg. 127) The Manila Times, May 24, 1956. These claim-owners were members of the Philippine Base Metals Mines headed by Enrique Santamaria. Santamaria had been named assignee by FFF members and others to operate and mine their sites; in return he was to pay them royalties for the ore, though the money was customarily released only after its delivery and sale. However, the claimants had grown impatient with his failure to make the delivery and so had decided, apparently on Escalona's prompting and without the express sanction of the National FFF, to expedite matters themselves.

President of the Tarlac FFF and also head of the "Association of Claim-owners" in Capas, protested the seizure on behalf of FFF farmer-claimants and asked for the intercession of the Department of Foreign Affairs.¹

Tensions produced by the incident warranted the assignment of a Philippine Constabulary detachment to preserve peace and order within the area.² The situation eased only when President Magsaysay personally visited the scene of the dispute to "get the facts for himself."³ While there he talked with Escalona and promised to help the miners secure permits. He was, however, manifestly as disturbed by their independent and precipitate action as by the way the Americans had dealt with it. Nonetheless, the ore was finally released to the Philippine government for final disposition; and when various complications in the matter of ownership were resolved, the Bureau of Mines was authorized to turn the Bueno Hill deposits over to the PBMM on payment of the royalties due the claim-owners. But, significantly, the disposition of three other claims of greater value remained pending until proper assessments could be made by the Bureau.⁴

The dispute over the Capas mines, already partially rectified, might have died a natural death had not various Philippine solons decided to exploit it for political purposes. Affirming that "the recurrence of incidents in Clark Field warranted immediate restudy of the PI-US bases agreement," a special House committee was called into session for this purpose.⁵ The time was likewise provident for the Tarlac solon. The Governor and other Tarlac officials formally presented a petition before the Committee for the "reclamation of a 58,000 hectare site in the province then under American jurisdiction."⁶

Coincident with this was Escalona's apparent attempt to further force the mines issue,⁷ for he brought to Magsaysay's attention the re-establishment of a U. S. military check-point on the government-owned highway to Bueno Hill; Escalona alleged - with the support of the Tarlac government - that he and a group of farmers had been unnecessarily detained

1. The Manila Times, May 24, 1956.

2. The Manila Times, May 23, 1956.

3. The Manila Times, May 28, 1956.

4. Without the operation of these three claims, the Bueno Hill enterprise would not "pay off," according to the PBMM, as the ores must be combined to make them saleable. (Conference, Bureau of Mines, between claimants attended by writer, May 26, 1956. Also see The Manila Times, May 25, 1956.)

5. The Manila Times, May 24, and May 25, 1956. Later negotiations turned to a consideration of the jurisdiction of P. I. courts over U. S. military personnel and on this point talks were to break down.

6. The Manila Times, May 25, 1956. This was calculated as almost the entire area of Clark Field. For obvious reasons, nothing came of this demand.

7. Escalona's move could also be interpreted as a means of giving fuller substantiation to his role in the earlier incident which had aroused criticism.

by U. S. guards stationed there. The matter was already a touchy one inasmuch as the President had previously ordered the outpost's removal, warning that it constituted a cause for serious friction between Filipinos and Americans.¹ Hence, its return a few days later was viewed by many as a belligerent act by U. S. Army authorities.² At any rate the move was propitious; President Magsaysay not only disposed of the controversial checkpoint, but he commanded an immediate clearance for operation of the three contested mining claims.

However, when several months passed without a final decision, the National Federation finally assumed the initiative in a concerted effort to again press for a conclusion. There was currently under bilateral negotiation, a delimitation agreement whereby 29,000 hectares of the military reservation would be released. The Federation seized this opportunity to request Senator Emanuel Pelaez, spokesman for the P. I. bases panel, for inclusion in the agreement of an additional 5,000 hectares of rich agricultural land which some 800 of its members had occupied and cultivated for several years. FFF officials followed this up with a letter inviting members of the panel to visit the area where they could confer with local officials and make an ocular inspection of the conditions obtaining there.³ In this way, the FFF concluded:

...future sources of friction will be avoided and the agreement to be arrived at in the current negotiations will be based on complete understanding of the facts. This will make for a stronger and more lasting friendship between the Philippines and the United States...⁴

When these measures proved a failure, the Federation formally petitioned Vice-President and concurrently Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Carlos Garcia, who was then Chairman of the Philippine Panel.⁵

The Federation likewise chose this moment to bring to the panel's attention the question of the high-grade manganese ore deposited within the reservation and still held by U. S. authorities despite RM's directives. Montemayor, during a press conference avowed: "the 800 farmers who own the claims cannot wait until the bases talks are over before getting action on their claim to the 5,000 hectares and the manganese ore..."⁶

1. The Manila Times, May 24, 1956.

2. The Manila Times, May 26, 1956.

3. The Manila Times, September 1, 1956; Philippine Herald, September 1, 1956; Sentinel, September 1, 1956.

4. Sentinel, September 8, 1956.

5. The Manila Times, September 2, 1956. The Panel was reluctant, however, to satisfy the demand having already committed itself to the 29,000 hectare allotment.

6. The Manila Times, September 1, 1956. He further declared: "the farmers have to sell the ore which has already been contracted by the PBMM for export to Japan," and he explained, as had the farmers earlier, the danger of rains washing away the stockpiles and the urgent need of funds for the planting season then underway.

However, he hastened to assure that:

...The Federation of Free Farmers submitted this suggestion for no other motive than to "protect...the interests of our barrio farmers in the areas concerned, as well as to help insure greater stability in the friendly relations between the Philippines and the United States based on complete understanding, good faith and mutual tolerance."¹

Following this FFF maneuver, an indignation rally was staged in Capas. Some 800 farmers assembled to demand "the immediate release of...lands not needed for military purposes." "Give us ricefields, not airfields," was the slogan.² They also demanded the removal of the stockpiled ore as well as permission to recommence operation of their three mining claims. Within a few days the U. S. Embassy granted these latter two requests. Furthermore, the Federation's proposition calling for "reversion to private property" of the 5,000 hectare area within the reservation was included in the P. I. panel's presentation on delimitation to the U. S. panel. Although the bilateral negotiations ended without any positive action taken on the request, it has since been shifted to the Philippine Foreign Affairs Office where the Federation is now working through Agredado, Legal Counsel of the Department, with the expectation of a final approval.³

To what degree FFF efforts can be credited with these accomplishments is difficult to ascertain in view of the many and complex political issues involved. Certainly they were a contributing factor. The FFF had perhaps not followed the most judicious course and much of its success was due to favorable circumstances. Nonetheless, it had come to a belated, but willing defense of the members thereby showing its responsibility to their interests while also capitalizing on the propagandistic opportunities opened by the dispute.⁴

1. Sentinel, September 1, 1956.

2. The Manila Times, September 3, 1956. Also, a delegation of high Tarlac officials together with Thelmo Escalona, made a personal appearance before the panel to press their proposals. The National Federation took no part in these deliberations, although express sanction had been given to any move Escalona might take in consonance with FFF policy.

3. Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor, October 2, 1957, personal interview. The FFF has this to say about similar activities recently undertaken: "In addition to the discovery by our members of mineral lands in Capas, several discoveries have also been made in (other) provinces... The National Office, through its economic department is assisting in the registration of the mining claims, in the securing of permits and in the disposition of the claim-owners' rights under terms and conditions most favorable to them." (FFF, Report on Operations (from October, 1953 to June, 1956).)

4. The Federation was, however, called to account by the Asia Foundation for its actions in the dispute and the following events:

Other Cases

The National Federation has not always attended to cases brought to its notice with the persistence and care necessary to bring them to a successful conclusion. There are numerous instances when it has failed in its function as a "weapon of common defense" for the membership. This may be due to the fact that the FFF has only a limited number of qualified lawyers who can handle the hundreds of cases referred to the National Office; or the case may be relatively insignificant and hence others of more urgency must take precedence. However, in deciding priorities, the FFF is inclined to restrict itself to widely publicized tenancy disputes rather than obscure issues involving, for example, FFF fishermen who are a minority group in the Federation, though they are entitled to the same legal protection as others. But then again the Federation may be faced by insurmountable obstacles created by government officials, vested interests or even the legal process itself which admits of any number of unscrupulous practitioners.

However, the Federation, when faced with a legal impasse, has frequently addressed its problems to the Presidential Complaints and Action Committee.¹ The FFF may, for example, call upon the aid of the PCAC to force an award or decision on legal cases which have remained on the court dockets for too prolonged a period, such a delay oftentimes being extremely prejudicial to the FFF members concerned (as in the disposition of a palay harvest). However, of possible alternatives, recourse to the PCAC has not always proven too successful perhaps because the PCAC cannot act directly in resolving a conflict but can only recommend appropriate action to the government office concerned.

At other times the FFF has appealed to Judge Jesus Barrera, now Secretary of Justice, for intervention when the ordinary legal procedures have failed to effect a solution.² Such an occasion arose with an FFF-handled tenancy dispute in Concepcion, Tarlac relating to the disposition of a palay harvest. The palay under litigation, supposedly to remain in the custody of the FFF tenant pending final settlement, was confiscated by the landlord's overseer without the knowledge or consent of the tenant. The FFF lawyer, Thelmo Escalona, thereupon filed a complaint for theft before the Justice of the Peace of Concepcion. However, inasmuch as the local Judge refused to docket the case, the FFF requested Judge Barrera to assign a representative to investigate the situation "for the satis-

1. This committee was formed shortly after Magsaysay came into office. It was placed under the Office of the President of the Philippines. Any person can appeal to the PCAC against any governmental agency or official and the PCAC will hold an investigation of the matter. However, the PCAC was abolished in 1958, but has been replaced by a similar agency.

2. Judge Barrera was once president of the early postwar Democratic Alliance - a liberal minority group which for a time included Huk representatives. Later Undersecretary of Justice during the Magsaysay administration, Judge Barrera has recently been given the post of Secretary of Justice.

faction of all parties concerned."¹ Judge Barrera, after reviewing the facts of the case, summoned the Justice of the Peace to a conference in Manila where the matter was settled informally!² The local judicator was thereafter "willing to docket any case filed by FFF lawyers."³

The Federation has experienced numerous difficulties"of a similar nature when pressing litigation on the Justice of the Peace Level". Not infrequently"the J."P. is a sycophant of landed interests and the"tenant can hardly expect"an impartial hearing. One technique the Judge"may employ is to interpret a dispute as a civil, rather than a tenancy, case. He will then decide the former against the tenant. But if the case can"be classified as a tenancy one, it may be transferred to the Court of Agrarian Relations where a more impartial judgement can be rendered. The FFF has occasionally,"but with"little success,"recommended the transfer of partisan Justices of the Peace.

Land Settlement

The Federation in reviewing its legal role in tenancy"disputes admits:

...the solution of tenancy disputes"is at most negative. It aims"merely to prevent oppression. It is not positive..so"that ...it only prevents"a bad situation from getting worse. But it does not strike at the root of the problem. The root of the problem among the farmers today is landlessness and insufficient production.⁴

However, the Federation further concedes"that it has not arrived at the "increase of production stage" of its proposed activities, although promotion of"agrarian peace, initiation and extension of rural development projects and services etc. are intended to augment productive capacities. This has"been"largely"blamed, rightly or wrongly, on the Federation's paucity of funds and personnel.⁵ Thus, especially of late, the Federation has propounded with greater intensity."land settlement;"viewing this as

1. The FFF added, as a customary"footnote to such petitions: "We can of course resort to the ordinary judicial remedies", but we thought there might be a better and faster administrative"remedy so that the"faith of the common masses in the competence of the present administration may"be confirmed." (Letter from FFF to Judge Barrera, August 18,"1954).

2. Letter from Montemayor to Escalona, August 23, 1954!"

3. Information obtained from"Mr. Montemayor,"March 21,"1956, personal interview.

4. Montemayor, Speech delivered before the Knights of Columbus of San Fernando, Pampanga, September 26, 1954. It should be noted that at"this time he did not specifically state the methods of rectifying"landlessness other than settlement on public agricultural lands. Such were to come later.

5. Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor, February"13, 1956!" It is, though, highly questionable that, aside from an organizational-informational guide for its members, the FFF is the suitable agency for stimulation of agricultural production!"

a cardinal means of appeasing the peasants' constant land hunger and, no doubt, as an appealing slogan calculated to keep alive the peasants' interest in the movement.

Through its so-called land settlement program, the Federation of Free Farmers seeks to promote its paramount objective: "the ownership of family-size farms" by each FFF member." It thus purports to offer "one of the basic remedies to the farmers' problems"¹ - a remedy long in vogue among agrarian reformers but yet untested. The FFF has approached its goal in three ways: (1) by resettlement of members through the government's National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA);² (2) by helping members acquire farm lots from public agricultural lands; and, (3) by helping members secure lands through the Land Tenure Administration i.e. by subdivision and redistribution of big landed estates. However, as will be seen, these three methods in combination have had, in their application, only a negligible influence in shifting the pattern of Philippine landownership.

NARRA

In November of 1955 a conference was held between officials of the Federation and the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration. An outline was sketched for a comprehensive coordination of activities between the two groups designed to be of mutual benefit. It was decided that the FFF would be largely responsible for disseminating NARRA information to its rank and file in the form of films, pamphlets etc. and also orally through direct informational campaigns in the barrios. This in fact had been the main FFF contribution to the NARRA program in the past; now there was to be a renewed emphasis and greater intensification of effort. The FFF likewise pledged cooperation with NARRA agents in pinpointing those areas - predominantly in the Central Luzon provinces - which are most plagued by agrarian unrest and overconcentration of farming population for here prospective settlers would largely be contacted.³ This was wholly in consonance with FFF aims:

With respect to land settlement, the farmers of the Philippines, through the farmers' association, can tell the government who among them are most deserving of new lands to settle. The organization can act as their mouthpiece through which they can voice their problems...needs and...grievances.⁴

1. FFF. Report on Operations (from October, 1953 to June, 1956), p. 4.

2. The NARRA was established under R.A. 1160 in June 1954. Its primary objective has been to provide depressed farming elements with family-size farms.

3. However, only 37% of NARRA settlers by 1955 had come from provinces where less than 50% of the cultivated land was farmed by owner-operators. See Wurfel, "Philippine Agrarian Reform Under Magsaysay," Far Eastern Survey, January, 1958, p. 9.

4. FFF, "The Importance of Land Settlement," p. 5.

The Federation furthermore agreed, in line with this policy, to aid NARRA in the screening and briefing of potential FFF settlers on the barrio level. This particular aspect of NARRA procedure has assumed increasing paramountcy inasmuch as considerable difficulties have been encountered with the type of farmers recruited for the resettlement projects. This, the NARRA complains, is attributable to lack of careful screening of farmer-applicants. For, rather than enlisting only the "pioneer" who is industrious, conscientious and adaptable to new locations and alien agricultural problems,¹ NARRA settlements have drawn a large percentage of the most intractable and undesirable of the depressed farming population. These settlers, NARRA believes, have greatly frustrated the progress of the settlements which depend to a large extent on the capacities of individual farmers. A thorough indoctrination of farmers prior to their resettlement is likewise considered an essential by the NARRA. The settler must "be put in the right frame of mind." Otherwise he expects "the government to do everything" and will, correspondingly, do nothing to help himself.²

With respect to the Federation's role in the screening and briefing of NARRA settlers, it cannot be overlooked that FFF leaders thus far have not adhered too closely to the terms of the agreement, but have been guided primarily by expediency. The FFF has endeavored to provide as many members as possible with opportunities for resettlement. Generally this is viewed, not only as a method for retaining the loyalty of the membership, but also a way of proving the organization's intent as well as influence with the government. Hence, the FFF is prone to a greater leniency in processing its members as qualified NARRA settlers than what that agency would perhaps ultimately desire. Likewise, once the NARRA has approved the applicants, local FFF officials seem to feel they are no longer obligated to indoctrinate the FFF settlers in their future role as "pioneers," though the NARRA has repeatedly emphasized this particular function.³

However, within a considerably limited framework, collaboration between NARRA and the Federation has worked with reasonable effectiveness and to the interests of each, though it would be fallacious to claim that any substantial benefits had thereby been derived. FFF leaders have described the NARRA's benefits to hundreds of Free Farmers throughout the

1. A largely jungle area such as Palewan demands different techniques of cultivation, seed selection etc. than, for example, the long-settled region of Central Luzon!

2. Conference between NARRA and FFF officials, November 14, 1956, attended by writer. However, it might be noted that realization of these goals is often seriously impeded by the rapid resettlement targets the NARRA also seeks to meet. On the whole, government projects aim at resettling some 120,000 families in ten years - an extremely ambitious goal.

3. FFF policy directives regarding NARRA's program have been channeled to local leaders primarily through the FFF Land Settlement Department. Taking notice of the fact that the Department's responsibilities - largely shouldered by one or two individuals - encompass numerous other projects, it is not surprising that the attention paid to some aspects of NARRA-FFF activity has fallen short of the original bargain. Too, no system had been devised whereby either NARRA or national FFF officials could check performance on the local level to the extent necessary to ensure proficiency!

provinces and have actively encouraged their resettlement under the NARRA program.¹ The NARRA, for its part, has aided the FFF in relocating some 300 FFF families, chiefly in the Panacan, Palawan project - a very minute proportion, however, of the number of FFF farmers who should be transferred.

Notwithstanding, the relationship has been at times a rather shaky one. For when the NARRA's administration of resettlement projects has proven prejudicial to the well-being of FFF settlers, the Federation has felt compelled to serve as an avenue of protest for those members. Such a situation obtained in February of 1957 resulting in a temporary rift in NARRA-FFF relations. After an inspection tour of the Panacan, Palawan project, Segundo Gonzales, President of the Bulacan FFF, "exposed" to President Magsaysay what he termed the "deplorable" conditions of FFF settlers there. He received full support from the national officialdom. A formal complaint was likewise submitted to the NARRA. The FFF testified that the land allotted the settlers was unsuitable for agricultural purposes² and that their food dole was insufficient to meet their basic needs as were other facilities. Fifty of the FFF families residing in Panacan requested that they be transported back to their home province, Bulacan; President Magsaysay complied.³

In view of the fact that the agency was just recovering from a rather major "Magsaysay offensive" on the maladministration of its program and was undergoing a thorough revamping, the reverberations were especially loud. According to FFF reports, no doubt slightly exaggerated for the public, RM immediately called to account the NARRA officials in charge of the Palawan project and as promptly dispatched planeloads of food and medicines to the settlement, likewise assigning to the area additional

1. (Pg. 138) This writer attended many meetings in the barrios and almost without exception, the NARRA program has been a major topic of discussion!

2. This "unsuitability" could be more accurately laid to the difficulties of clearing a heavily forested area with only the most rudimentary of tools. Hence this complaint is perhaps more indicative of the settlers' discouragement than of actuality. The FFF likewise held that the land was far from being what the settlers had expected. "This no doubt is reflective of the propaganda program of the NARRA which, in the absence of detailed, realistic descriptions of settlement life, tends to mislead the farmer. The Federation likewise apparently had done nothing to enlighten the settler!"

3. The FFF claims that, in addition, he promised to provide these families with better lands in Luzon resettlement areas such as Isabela or Cagayan. Though this has not yet been fulfilled since his death, the FFF is still attempting to secure the land. (FFF, First Quarterly Report (for 1957).)

medical personnel"¹ He also directed the FFF to organize all Panacan settlers in his usual pre-emptory manner. The FFF had already established an association there among its 200 settlers, but little further organizational activities have been carried on among the rest of the population despite RM's suggestion. The main reason advanced by FFF officials is the expense and difficulty of maintaining physical contact with the Panacan leaders; they are isolated on Palawan island some distance from Luzon with inadequate transportation and communication facilities.

The Panacan incident did not occasion a permanent breach in FFF-NARRA collaborations though it had considerably lessened the cordiality of dealings between the two. For after the situation had somewhat calmed, NARRA and FFF officials moved to repair the relationship. A conference was called; mutual grievances were aired and the leaders discussed the numerous problems confronting the settlers and what could be done towards their solution. Nothing concrete, other than a reaffirmation of cooperation, emerged from this joint meeting although NARRA did commit itself to an appropriation for construction of a hospital in Panacan.² However, the profitability of the liaison - on the FFF side at least - has warranted its continuance; hence, FFF policy with regard to NARRA has remained virtually unaltered to date.

Acquisition of Farm Lots From Public Lands

Despite the high priority theoretically given land resettlement, the FFF has, in recent public statements, apparently taken cognizance of the limitations of such programs as an answer to agrarian problems.

1. The writer had occasion to visit the Panacan, Palawan settlement in November 1955 and interviewed personally some 25 settler families. These were some of the conditions as they pertain to medical facilities and food rations. (1) Each person is entitled to 12.2 Kg. of rice per month, but this ration is not always allotted on time nor in the quantity specified as, among other things, it is frequently out of stock. Little else is provided to supplement the settler's diet. Many times families have been forced to consume their entire food supply for several weeks which was advanced them by NARRA and they find great difficulty in replenishing it. Especially is this so in view of the very poor harvests gathered from the little areas they have succeeded in clearing. (2) The "hospital" is (or was at least) a one room affair occupying 1/5 of a small building (3/5 of it being used for a third-grade school room and head teacher's office and 1/5 for the malaria control unit) and has no facilities other than a single gas burner for sterilization purposes. The stock of medicine is very small. There are no facilities for emergency operations such as electricity, ward rooms, counting chambers for blood tests etc. The nearest hospital where cases of any seriousness can be taken is Puerto Princesa, 19 kilometers of very poor dirt roads away. They are occasionally washed away! One doctor is in charge of the "hospital"; he has 120-130 consultation cases per day and has only one or two women assistants. Too, persons outside the settlement area avail themselves of what facilities are offered, increasing his responsibilities.

2. Letter from FFF to writer, March 1957.

Or perhaps in more accurate phraseology, the Leadership has been forced into a reappraisal of its resettlement program, having failed to show any concrete achievements in this area. At any rate, FFF officials now point out the impossibility of resettlement efforts keeping pace, in the long run, with a Filipino population which is increasing at an estimated rate of some 400,000 a year. Nor can the government continue to sustain the cost of resettling a family for some ₱1,000 to ₱1,500. Even disregarding these and other factors, tenantry is not necessarily eradicated through resettlement, FFF officials claim. For the old patterns tend to persist and to be reinstated in new areas. With this line of argument the Federation has consequently turned towards other, more advantageous methods of helping its members to acquire land which is, under the FFF's present circumstances, no doubt a judicious retreat.

Farm ownership for individual Free Farmers has come about largely as a result of land disputes resolved in their favor. Here the Federation, again acting as both legal consultant and political emissary for its membership, has been considerably active. The following two cases indicate the manner and extent to which the Federation has fulfilled these roles, though they are only a sample of many similar cases in the Federation's files.

Plaridel Case

Through FFF action, sporadic though continued over a period of two years, some 250 family heads residing in barrio Plaridel, Basud, Camarines Norte are now in the process of receiving homestead patents for an area of over 3,000 hectares. The case dates back a number of years. Leonardo Vega who is now President of the Camarines Norte FFF, submitted, as former President of Samaban Magsasaka, a petition in 1947 for approval of homestead applications on behalf of the Plaridel farmers, many of whom had possession and cultivation claims dating before World War II and earlier. Vega's request was referred to the Provincial Forester of Camarines Norte for investigation. For, before the Bureau of Lands can issue patents,¹ the Bureau of Forestry, under the Public Land Law, must certify that the land is classifiable as "alienable and disposable" agricultural land and a survey must be conducted. Inasmuch as the Plaridel residents were not financially capable of hiring their own surveyor, they were wholly dependent on the government for such. However, by 1950 no action had yet been taken on the petition.

Finally, in 1953² Vega was informed by the Bureau of Forestry that

1. This is the most important act in the disposition of public lands, according to the Bureau of Lands, "because it serves as the grant by which the government transfers ownership of the property to the individual applicants and which thus becomes the basis for issuance of title to the holder." (See Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Annual Report (for fiscal year ending June 30, 1954), p. 53.)

2. By 1953 the Samahan Magsasaka had formally merged with the FFF.

the land in question was within a permanent forest area and therefore had to be retained for forestry purposes. Although Vega contested this decision, the issue remained pending.¹ Meanwhile the Plaridel farmers were becoming increasingly restive, and hostility towards forestry officials mounted. Many were threatening to take matters into their own hands should nothing be done.²

Faced with a worsening situation and a seemingly hopeless deadlock, the Camarines Norte FFF leaders therefore requested the help of the national Federation in October of 1954.³ The Federation, following a regularly established procedure, appealed the case to President Magsaysay. Once appraised of the problem, RM acted, but in a manner that had no precedent in his previous dealings with the Federation.⁴ The President flew posthaste to barrio Plaridel, taking with him other high-ranking government officials and National FFF leaders. His unheralded appearance in Plaridel not only increased his own popularity among the farmers - the FFF settlers there formed a community of their own naming it San Ramon - but it gave the FFF propaganda fuel for years to come. The community has in fact become the FFF showcase.³

While in Plaridel, the President gave assurances of an immediate issuance of patents to the legal occupants of the area. The Bureau of Forestry, in contravention to its earlier directive, was ordered to release the area to the Bureau of Lands for final disposition. But despite the expectations of the farmers, the order was not expedited. Though the case had been transferred to the Manila office of the Bureau of Lands, other bottlenecks were encountered. This was not out of the ordinary, however, for the Bureau of Lands has long been notorious for the slowness of its administrative machinery.

After a prolonged delay which was threatening to undo the favorable results of RM's Plaridel visit, the FFF rather belatedly began to exercise its authority. FFF officials conferred with Director Castrillo of the Bureau of Lands to determine why the Plaridel case had been held in abeyance for such a protracted period. Moreover, a complaint against Castrillo went simultaneously to RM who called the Director to account. A resolution seemed in the offing at long last with the formation of a committee in mid-1956 under Castrillo's supervision. The committee, on which the FFF was

1. Vega complained that agents of the Bureau of Forestry, Camarines Norte, "had been driving out present and first possessors of the land for the purpose of occupying it themselves or for giving same to relatives." (Information obtained from Mr. Vega, May 2, 1956, personal interview). This was not, it might be noted, an unheard-of occurrence in the annals of the Bureau. The issue was finally referred to the PCAC, but later dropped for lack of sufficient evidence.⁵ However, the person assigned to investigate the matter was an employee of the Forestry Bureau of Daet, Camarines Norte so that his recommendations were perhaps not without personal bias. (Letter from Vega to FFF, September 28, 1954.)

2. Rally held in Dast, Camarines Norte, April 10, 1956, attended by writer.

3. It is here where the first FFF mass blood donation took place. The FFF has secured an artesian well, a prefabricated school house for the residents and other benefits which have accrued chiefly from the reputation gained by Magsaysay's visit.

represented, began the screening of farmer-applicants in August of 1956 (RM had visited Plaridel in October of 1954).¹ But when a portion of land was found to have been inaccurately surveyed, the process of reclassification had to begin again. However, those claimants¹ affected were reviewed and certified in favor of twelve FFF petitioners.

Malalag Dispute

The Malalag, Davao dispute which originated during the incumbency of President Roxas in 1948, was first assigned to the National Federation in 1956 by Reodulfo Toca, head of the Freeman's Association of Malalag - a farmers' union of over 400 members. An estate covering 716 hectares in Malalag has been a cause of conflict between the heirs of one, Orval Hughes and the Freeman farmers, once tenants of Hughes.² Under the lead of the Garcia family, Hughes' heirs have recently taken concerted measures to gain title to the land he occupied, assuming in fact nominal ownership; while the Freeman farmers have contested their right to do so³ and have asked for a subdivision and redistribution of the estate in their preference.

In view of the opposing and unsubstantiated claims, an investigation was conducted in 1954 to determine prior occupancy, land improvements etc. However, the farmers complained that only four tenants were interviewed by a Department of Agriculture representative, and then only in the most perfunctory manner.⁴ They further charged this agent had been lavishly entertained by the Garcias and, after accepting a bribe of some P500, had left the estate without further inspection. On the basis of this, the Garcias held that the land was theirs and the tenants feared they would be thrown out unjustly and without a further hearing.

Toca and the lawyer of the Freeman's Association were subsidized by their membership to make representations in Manila where they tried vainly to obtain an audience with RM and other officials. When they could find

1. Letter from FFF to writer, June 20, 1958.

2. An American who had married a native and settled on the land before World War II, Hughes was later killed by the Japanese during the Occupation.

3. The farmers claim that the estate had reverted to public land after the expiration of the Hughes' lease in 1949, while the heirs have attested to the four-year extension of the lease. Yet the farmers avow that it had been awarded under false terms and thereby invalidated.

4. Information obtained from farmers in Malalag, April 1956, personal interviews. In a personal interview with Mrs. Garcia, (who had virtually barricaded herself in her home with several guns in fear of peasant reprisals) she acknowledged this fact, stating, however, that all the "necessary facts" had been obtained from her husband. "All I am interested in," she said, "is gaining rightful title to the land in which my husband has invested over P30,000; then I plan to start mechanisation." The Captain of the Provincial Constabulary, interviewed by the writer, was unwilling to give any details regarding the matter, although he did intimate that the investigation had been poorly conducted and inadequate. In the writer's subsequent talk with the investigator himself, he was unable to give any explanation of the case or the applicable provisions of the law.

no solution, the Federation finally agreed to take the case. Tocaó gave the FFF ₱1,000 for legal expenses, stating that his only wish was a thorough and equitable reinvestigation of the estate with the hope of its eventual redistribution. He likewise indicated, as an added inducement, his willingness to integrate the Freeman's Association with the FFF.¹

Meanwhile the situation had become very tense with property destruction and personal strife that resulted in the near¹ deaths of several estate foremen. The farmers, again contending they were on public land, refused to turn over the one-third share of produce to the Garcias as self-designated landlords, whereupon the share and often the entire harvest were forcibly confiscated - reportedly under the armed protection of Philippine Constabulary security guards¹. Several tenants were in fact jailed on grounds of assault when they resisted the seizure. Charges of "estafa" were likewise filed by the landlords against the farmers, some fifteen cases finally docketed¹.

On the basis of these reports the Federation sent a letter to the Presidential Complaints and Action Committee indicting the Malalag Chief of Police for "misconduct and oppressive acts committed." The FFF protested:

The Chief of Police entertains practically all the complaints filed by the rich heirs of...Hughes against our farmer-members and refuses to entertain the complaints filed by¹ the poor farmer-occupants of the land against the heirs¹. There are also reports that P. C¹ soldiers are being utilized to accompany the heirs...to the homes of the farmers and, in the presence of the P. C. soldiers, the farmers are intimidated and sometimes mauled and their harvest forcibly taken away.²

The FFF then filed an administrative complaint against the Chief of Police "for his removal or suspension."

The Federation also brought the problem of reinvestigation personally to Jaime Ferrer, then Undersecretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources¹. At first Ferrer stated: "As far as I'm concerned the Hughes case is closed."³ However, when Montemayor presented the farmers¹ stand and pushed for an entire review of the case, Ferrer finally agreed. With this official endorsement, a PCAC investigator together with a FFF Legal Counsel under

1. It seems, however, that he had a more personal interest in the case for he also indicated that he was involved in a private feud with Garcia. (Information obtained from Mr. Tocaó, April, 1956, personal interview.) The Freeman's Association has since then been formally merged with the FFF though no dues have been collected¹.

2. Letter from the FFF to the PCAC, May 10, 1956.

3. That is, the claims of the Garcia family were legal. It seems that Mr. Garcia, a personal friend of Ferrer and his former army mate during the war, had come himself to Manila to confer with Ferrer about his claim and had convinced him of its justification. (Conference between Montemayor and Ferrer, April, 1956, attended by writer.)

Montemayor's orders, flew to Malalag to begin the inquiry. A telegram, later received by Malacanang from the PCAC agent, attested to the inflammability of the situation and an ATC representative, on his insistence, was assigned to the case to settle questions on a disposssession and a crop-sharing¹

Initially the Federation did not take the Malalag issue directly to President Magsaysay which is the usual procedure. Two reasons probably account for this. For one, the Federation was not entirely certain of the claims advanced by Toca², although the Leadership gauged the cause of the tenants to be one worth appropriating. Secondly, Ferrer had demonstrated his support of FFF aims under similar circumstances and the FFF, exerting pressure in this direction, no doubt concluded that the case would be expedited equally as well on this level. Only in the last instance was Magsaysay appraised of the situation so that favorable results would be assured.

On the basis of facts gleaned by the investigatory group, the PCAC finally recommended the subdivision of the land into three-hectare, a family-size farms upon the approval of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. In accordance, Ferrer forwarded his endorsement of the resolution to the Office of the President for final authorization in September of 1956. The Garcia family, however, had simultaneously filed a petition through their counsel directly with that office asking for the sale of the land in their favor, but the FFF filed a oppositional claim which ultimately were recognized. For after further inquiries, charges and countercharges, the final decision came from the Office of the President in October: 466 hectares of the former Hughes estate were to be awarded to the Malalag farmers.³

* * * * *

In the above mentioned cases favorable resolutions were obtained. But in a large proportion of other FFF-handled cases pertaining to the acquisition of farm lots, the time and effort involved in their settlement are too often incommensurate with the results. Yet the FFF Leadership, continually pressed on all sides by a multitude of grievances demanding redress, is exceedingly reluctant to disregard any issue which appears explosive. For it is feared that by so doing it might risk losing the confidence and allegiance of an impatient peasantry increasingly aware

1. Letter from FFF to writer, June 26, 1957.

2. Some authorities presume that the tenants deliberately misinterpreted events so as to vindicate their claims; this had frequently happened in the past. Col. Luna, the local Army Commander, contended that Toca was responsible for the explosiveness of the situation. In all probability, the Col. concluded, Toca was nothing more than "an unorthodox, professional squatter organizer intent on his own personal gain." (Statement of Cola Luna during an interview with FFF leaders, April 1956, attended by writer.)

3. The Malalag farmers are now in possession of the land. (Letter from FFF to writer, June 1958.)

of the inequality of its status. However, the Federation has still to reach a growth in terms of numerical membership, organizational strength and administrative experience on all levels which will enable it to meet, with a truly effective counterforce, the many obstacles posed by an often disinterested and irresponsible government bureaucracy as well as by a landed minority with almost uncontrolled authority.

Expropriation and Subdivision of Big Landed Estates

With the passage of the "Land Reform Act of 1955" and the creation of the Land Tenure Administration - the government agency assigned to carry out the policy enunciated by the bill - a new impetus was given towards fulfillment of the Magsaysay regime's pledge of "land to the landless." The new program, though shortsighted and restrictive in various respects, was, nonetheless, envisioned "as a means of improving the social and economic conditions of rural inhabitants."¹ A three-man commission with ten field agencies in Central Luzon, the LTA was invested with the authority to purchase big landed estates either by negotiated sale, or failing this, by expropriation but only on petition of the majority of tenants involved. These powers apply to individually owned estates in excess of 300 contiguous hectares or corporate landholdings in excess of 600 contiguous hectares. However, no retention limit is set in cases where there is "justified" agrarian unrest. Acquired property is to be subdivided into family-size farms and resold at cost to bonafide tenants or occupants on an installment basis!²

With the government's recognition of the advisability and propriety of breaking up large haciendas for distribution to farmer-tenants, FFF interest in such proceedings has increased accordingly. As of August 30, 1956, the FFF tallied six applications for the expropriation of large estates involving over 2,000 family heads which had been submitted to the President of the Philippines. These memoranda, FFF officials affirm, "have been favorably endorsed to, and are now being acted upon, by the Land Tenure Administration."³ In the over-all picture, the Federation

1. The Manila Times, December 8, 1956.

2. The tenant cannot acquire more than six hectares. He has 25 years in which to repay the government for his lot. There are, however, numerous shortcomings in the bill's provisions. For example, without a strong tenant representative able to bring pressure to bear, estates may be purchased at too high a price contrary to the interests of the tenants. Too, before a petition is filed the landholder may re-register his land in some other person's name, usually a relative. Or he may form a family corporation. In either case he may succeed in bringing the ownership below the legal retention limit. Furthermore, a landlord may transfer portions of his landholding to other individuals hence sidestepping the "contiguous" qualification in the clause by parcelization. (See Wurfel, "Philippine Agrarian Reform Under Magsaysay" Far Eastern Survey, February 1958, p. 26.) On the other hand, many large estates cannot be acquired inasmuch as they are not of contiguous area.

3. (Pg. 150) FFF. Report on Operations (from October, 1953 to June, 1956.) p. 4.

has perhaps made greater advancements in securing farm ownership for its members through the channels previously mentioned. But the FFF's utilization of the opportunities opened by the Land Reform Act have assumed greater significance of late. A few cases may be mentioned in illustration.

Dimson Estate Dispute

One of the more noteworthy of FFF cases, recently determined through the offices of the Land Tenure Administration, was the widely publicized Dimson estate¹ controversy. In 1955 an attempt was made by the ITA to distribute the 323 hectares of rich agricultural land comprising the Dimson holding to its "present occupants"; the majority of this group were former tenants of Dimson and the FFF counted some 70 as members.

However, obstacles to a speedy settlement arose when controversial petitions for a share in the reapportionment were put forth by the cultivator-claimants on the one side and by an influential group of landed officials on the other. The Mayor of Dinalupihan, one of the most powerful among the latter, alleged priority of occupancy for some 40 hectares of the estate although he was not a cultivator.² Equally as influential was the Governor of Bataan who also spoke for a portion of the area.

The Federation undertook to defend the position of its members involved in the controversy against that of the landed interests and its presence appeared to be needed urgently. When the Mayor arrested twelve FFF members without a warrant for "refusal to vacate their government-owned farms," the FFF protested to the authorities, but with no redress.³ Consequently a delegation of over 100 farmers from Dinalupihan made an appearance in Malacanang to press for a solution. After hearing their protests, President Magsaysay firmly asserted: "A Mayor can't do that" and he vowed to suspend him should he persist in unlawful activities.⁴

1. This land was once part of the church-owned hacienda Dinalupihan of 4,000 hectares situated in Dinalupihan, Bataan. The hacienda was later acquired by the now defunct Rural Progress Administration and the Dimson area was subsequently leased to a wealthy Pampangueno, Rufino Dimson. But when the lease expired in 1948 and the government cancelled its renewal, Dimson refused to vacate the land holding; nor would he pay any taxes for its use. Only after a costly, seven-year court battle could the government again assume control of the land.

2. According to Wurfel his claim was based on prewar leases with the Roman Catholic Church.

3. The arrest was also made despite the fact that Commissioner Santiago of the ATC had advised the farmers to remain on the land until the court itself expressly sanctioned their eviction. See The Manila Chronicle, May 5, 1955.

4. Malacanang delegation, May 28, 1956, attended by writer.

The President would not commit himself beyond assurances of his administration's help, however; and he made no statement regarding the distribution of lots in the Dimson area. The farmers were little pacified.

When the dispute threatened to get out of control, a conference was finally held in Malacanang between the warring parties. Under the direction of Sofronio Quimson, Commissioner for Civil Affairs (and also Montemayor's brother-in-law), the hearing proved to be a decidedly bitter one with each side strongly claiming the legal right of first choice in obtaining land.¹ However, Commissioner Quimson merely reiterated Malacanang's stand: those who had actually been working the land themselves would receive preference in purchasing it.

The conference was concluded with a truce between the two factions. The FFF, as spokesman for its members, at last agreed to vacate the land temporarily during which interim there would be an official screening of all so-called "farmers" to ascertain who were the actual cultivator-occupants. However, fearing further coercion and intimidation of the peasants by the town authorities, the Federation asked that a Philippine Constabulary unit be assigned to the area to maintain justice. Antonio Abibuag was also given official endorsement as FFF representative to supervise the screening.²

The results of this "modus vivendi" were, however, contrary to expectations. When Abibuag, in the company of the FFF National Advisor, Fr. Mauri, arrived at the scheduled time in Dinalupihan to begin screening, the other members of the Malacanang investigating team failed to appear until late in the day. Meanwhile the Philippine Constabulary officer, Dantes, on special duty to ensure peace and order, took advantage of their absence to publicly indict the FFF leaders as Communists before a large public gathering, including the Mayor and Governor. Dantes likewise challenged their right to sit at a conference table for the official reviewing of applicants although they had been commissioned by Malacanang. The two were consequently forced to leave Dinalupihan.

1. The Governor, Mayor and other landlords comprised one group and the FFF President and attorneys the other. The landlords, as "residents" of Dinalupihan, asked for preference in purchasing the land affirming they were the prior possessors. They contended that the former tenants of Dimson had no right to buy lots because they weren't considered bonafide tenants or occupants prior to the government's acquisition of the estate; nor were they residents of Dinalupihan having come from Pampanga in 1947. The FFF held that its members should have first rights to the estate for those calling themselves "town residents," in league with the Mayor and Governor, were either noncultivators, lessees or big landowners. The FFF further pointed out that the original 25 claimants, identified with Muli's group, had since grown to some 300. This was a result of clever manipulation of data, the FFF protested.

2. Conference held in Malacanang, May 31, 1956, attended by writer. The FFF Leadership selected Abibuag inasmuch as he had been one of the original organizers in the region and was best acquainted with the conditions obtaining there.

The FFF promptly complained to Commissioner Quimson who ordered the Commander to appear in Malacanang for questioning.¹ However, Dantes did not appear and the Federation Leadership prepared formal charges against him to be filed with Brig. Gen. Manuel Cabale Chief of the Philippine Constabulary. Press statements were likewise issued to counteract the one-sided accounts of the incident which had already been published in some newspapers.² In a number of press interviews, Montemayor indicted Dantes for his undemocratic actions which were termed "unworthy of a provincial commander and unbecoming of an officer and gentleman"³ Furthermore, Montemayor openly acknowledged that "the FFF bid in Dinalupihan was being opposed by Bataan Governor Emilio Naval and a group of town residents headed by Mayor Federico Muli"; and this clique had intentionally acquiesced in Dantes' libelous behavior so as to discredit the FFF.⁴ These assertions evidently produced the desired effect for the PC Commander, at the height of notoriety, finally chose to retract his statement against the FFF. The organization had, in the process, received helpful publicity despite the initial setback.

Another conference of the fact-finding committee had, in the meantime, been held in the Dinalupihan Mayor's office to iron out mutual differences. Present were the LTA representatives, FFF officials and the Malacanang agent as well as the Mayor and Governor.⁵ Little took place during the meeting except mutual recrimination. The two parties were at a virtual deadlock that threatened to forestall any further attempt to gain a final settlement. However, with pressures from Malacanang and a smoothing over of some of the rougher points of controversy, the screening of both cultivator-claimants and "residents" finally got underway in August. Abibuag was redesignated to oversee the proceedings on behalf of the FFF. As decided by the committee Chairman: "The screening will be done in public and counsel for the FFF and Dinalupihan farmers will inhibit themselves from cross-examining the applicants to avoid unnecessary delay in the

1. Quimson would offer no further assistance other than to admonish the Dinalupihan officials, in much the same vein as before, that the FFF "should be extended all possible courtesies" (Informal conference between FFF leaders and Commissioner Quimson, June 6, 1956, attended by writer.)

2. The reporter of The Philippine News Service in which most of the accounts - extremely unfavorable to the FFF - appeared, "was a relative of those whose interests coincided with the Mayor's," the FFF alleged. The Mayor was likewise stated as having "lavishly entertained the reporter" as a reward for his service. The Manila Chronicle, June 8, 1956.

3. (Pg. 154) The Manila Chronicle, June 8, 1956.

4. (Pg. 154) The Manila Chronicle, June 8, 1956.

5. The writer was present before the FFF officials had arrived at the Mayor's office. During this interlude, the Mayor and Governor gave full vent to their bitterness over the land question, vowing the Federation to be a racketeering organization, communistic beyond doubt and totally incapable of honestly representing its member-claimants.

screening."¹

The Dimson estate dispute continued over a period of several months. Without the direct presence of the Federation, the farmer-applicants of Dinalupihan would have received scant attention from the authorities and might well have been deprived of any real rights to the estate land. However, it would seem that the initial strength and perseverance of FFF efforts slackened as the sensationalism of the issue faded and the proceedings began to drag. Though the Mayor and his clique were actively lobbying for every possible vantage point they could win, the Federation asserted itself only in sporadic trips to Malacanang. President Magsaysay had been appraised of at least the broad outlines of the issue, but the FFF exerted little further pressures in this direction. Casteneda and Quimson remained the primary contacts, yet Quimson's actual prerogatives as Commissioner for Civil Affairs were "limited to proffering advice to the President. This he did only halfheartedly and the FFF did not provoke him to intervene more forcefully. Chairman Casteneda of the LTA was cautious of partisanship" in the controversy!

Furthermore, the FFF leader delegated to manage affairs on the local front was inexperienced in legal procedures and unsure of his authority as advocate for the tenants.² Hence, those developments in the screening process prejudicial to the tenants were immediately referred to the FFF President in Manila rather than investigated on the spot.³ Several alleged anomalies reported to the National Office were disregarded when national officials were unable to visit the area themselves to determine their veracity.⁴ Intimidation of the FFF farmers continued, although subtly, and the determination of the farmers and the FFF leaders to fight

1. "Report on the Screening and Investigation of the Applicants in the Dimson Area, Dinalupihan Estate, Dinalupihan, Bataan..." (Submitted by the LTA and by Malacanang Fact Finding Committee and Counsel for the FFF, not dated.) The Counsel for the Dinalupihan farmers, the report stated: "vehemently opposed this policy and called it inquisitorial..." The Chairman then claimed he "pleaded with (him) explaining...that the previous screening had been delayed and practically bogged down because counsel for the two opposing groups argued with each other trying to disqualify the applicants to be screened."

2. As Wurfel notes, the "resident group" had hired a prominent lawyer from Manila to ferret out all possible gaps in the LTA Administrative Order No. 2. There were several! "It is apparent," Wurfel points out, "that in conflict situations administrative decisions are not made in strict adherence to legal precepts, but in compromise of the claims of the opposing groups." So that the weaker group would do all the conceding. (See Wurfel, "Philippine Agrarian Reform Under Magsaysay," Far Eastern Survey, February 28, pp! 28-29).

3. One complaint was registered against a LTA investigator. He was reputedly a relative of those most closely identified with the "residents" and had, consequently, been far from impartial in his screening of applicants!

4. (Pg. 156) To be considered was the fact that the FFF was engaged in the Capas Mines Dispute at this time which in part accounts for the inability of its leaders to attend "as closely as necessary to the progress of the screening committee in Dinalupihan.

the case slowly eroded. Nor did the FFF make any further attempt, after its unfortunate experience with PC Commander Dantes, to enlist the direct aid of law enforcement officers as a deterrent to such acts. The prevailing opinion among the Federation officials at this time seemed to be dominantly one of "let's wait and see." One reason undoubtedly was the support of RM which they counted on. As Montemayor optimistically predicted: "I believe that in the long run our members will be given the land, especially since RM will have the final say."¹

However, the outcome of the Dimson estate case fell below FFF expectations and no doubt was a far greater disappointment to the beleaguered cultivator-occupants of Dinalupihan whose hopes had been perhaps unrealistically raised by FFF propaganda. The Land Tenure Administration has assigned lots of three hectares each to 13 of the 70 FFF claimants.² The LTA settlement represents a compromise "acceptable" to the parties in the dispute, for the FFF did win a sizeable portion of the allocation considering that only 38 others were suggested by the Malacanang committee as recipients.³ At any rate, the FFF did not contest the decision which was then considered the final standard for the subdivision of the Dimson estate.

Other Cases

Although the Dimson Estate case has headed the list of so-called Federation "accomplishments," there are other examples of FFF activity along these lines. To mention only one: the FFF was able to force the subdivision and redistribution of Hacienda Felicidad Intal in Baggao, Cagayan where some 150 FFF members were employed as tenants. On the basis of a memorandum submitted to President Magsaysay in February of 1956, the Land Tenure Administration acted to the advantage of the FFF. After rather lengthy price negotiations and intense peasant unrest sometimes erupting in violence, the Hacienda Felicidad Intal was purchased and the FFF members are receiving farm lots.⁴

Numerous cases relating to expropriation could be mentioned, however, in which the FFF has been unable to obtain a settlement in favor of its members. Too, in many cases cited by the FFF as "successful," the benefits accruing to the membership have been unimpressive. All in all, the number of Free Farmers who have actually received land through FFF representations in expropriation proceedings constitute only a small minority. The FFF glossing over its shortcomings, seems intent on sustaining its immediate popularity primarily by promises and plans of what it will eventually accomplish. Yet in the long run meager results clothed in rhetoric are apt to generate a strong mood of disenchantment among the rank and file as the gap between program and achievements becomes more apparent.

1. Letter from FFF to writer, 1956.

2. The FFF later stated the total of claimants to be 40, no doubt to ease the discrepancy. See FFF, Third Quarterly Report (for 1956).

3. In the memorandum submitted by the screening committee to LTA Chairman Casteneda for approval, it was advised that five persons, found to be big landholders, be excluded. Though the Governor was not named it is safe to assume that he was among this group. Also the Mayor and his nine co-heirs were to be allocated only 16 hectares.

4. Letter from FFF to writer, June 10, 1958.

V. FFF ANSWER TO AGRARIAN REFORM

Defining agrarian reform as "the correction of the defects presently existing in the ownership and tenure of agricultural lands in the Philippines," the Federation has presented its own key to solution of the problem of tenantry. The answer, formulated by the FFF's National Advisor, Fr. Hector Mauri, is a plan for the abolition of tenancy mainly through the division of big landed estates! It is entitled "Land To The Tiller." However, "Land To The Tiller," it must be noted, is the culmination of what has been a gradual shift in the emphasis of FFF policy towards agrarian reform since the organization's inception. A proper place to begin in describing this change is Montemayor's earlier treatise, "Plows and Peace" which, as mentioned previously, was the forerunner of other plans more specifically suited to the Free Farmers movement.¹

At this time nothing so "drastic" as expropriation was contemplated as a program of action for the Federation of Free Farmers. In "Plows and Peace" the focus is exclusively on increased productivity in agriculture for "the basic problem of the Filipino farmer is insufficient production."² To further quote a few sections:

His basic problem is not dissidence...not disease... not lack of education...neither storage nor marketing...The farmer's basic problem is neither insecurity of tenure nor inequitable cropsharing, as some legislators seem to think. For no matter how secure the tenant is in his holding, and no matter how the crop is divided, if the crop is insufficient, it will remain insufficient. And if (so)...there can be neither security nor contentment for landlord and tenant...The basic problem of the farmer is not even free elections. For no matter how we preach democracy and freedom, as long as a man is hungry, he cannot be free to choose his leaders.³

Montemayor then branches into a discussion of the methods for remedying this basic problem of insufficient production:

The farmer's production cannot best be increased by the expropriation and subdivision of landed estates! Aside from the fact that the expropriation and subdivision of landed estates aims to solve our problems by multiplying them, no land has ever been made more productive by the simple process of dividing it. But the greatest objection is the fact that we have too much unoccupied and uncultivated agricultural land! While we can give to the landless thousands upon thousands of hectares of unoccupied agricultural land, why should we seize

1. Montemayor's "Plows and Peace" was first drafted in 1952, though not publicly promulgated until the following year.

2. Montemayor, "Plows and Peace," p. 3.

3. Ibid., p. 3 (italics added).

the occupied lands from their owners and divide them among other people? Is this not unjust?1"

The only solution, concluded Montemayor, is to replenish the fields of the farmer and improve his tools. "This can best be done by irrigation, the adoption of soil conservation measures, the use of fertilizers and mechanization."²

The Federation still asserts that improved agricultural production is a necessary ingredient in any program designed to raise the living standards of the rural populace. But it has repudiated the injustice of expropriation and has greatly de-emphasized the value and feasibility of settlement on "unoccupied agricultural land." It may be surmised that in 1953 Montemayor was chiefly interested in having his plan for cooperative farm mechanization adopted by those who could contribute substantially to its realization. They would, in all likelihood, be those most concerned with maintaining the existing, rural status quo.³

At the time the Federation of Free Farmers was initiated in October of 1953, Montemayor had not altered, to any appreciable extent, his stand and other FFF officials followed his lead. Indeed, the 1953 "Manifesto" of the Federation of Free Farmers carried a theme similar to that propounded in "Plows and Peace" and subsequent FFF pronouncements with only slight modifications. Urging the farmers to unite, the "Manifesto" declares:

In order to produce enough food and live with dignity, you must own sufficient land and adequate tools with which to work the land. This is your basic need as our ultimate objective. (Its) accomplishment...would involve...the settlement of idle lands...the adoption of modern tools and...means of production... But all these will necessarily take time. Hence you must have patience...⁴

The emphasis is still on increased production; only governmental neglect has caused its retardation. But the farming masses, "if organized, can assert their importance and effective measures will then be taken to right the situation, the FFF predicts." No concrete line of action which could be termed agrarian reform was then laid down, though settlement on idle lands is more strongly advocated.⁵

1. *Ibid.*, p. 4 (italics added).

2. *Ibid.*; p. 4.

3. Montemayor had, in fact, made overtures to several influential landholders to subsidize his plan, but was unsuccessful on the whole in winning their interest.

4. See Appendix I: *FFF Manifesto* (Italics added).

5. In a speech delivered before the Knights of Columbus of San Fernando, Pampanga, September 26, 1954, Montemayor avers: "In the material sphere, the FFF has two long-range objectives. They are: land settlement and increased production." No mention of anything approaching expropriation is made.

A brochure entitled "The Importance of Land Settlement" was also drafted at this time to more clearly define the FFF's stand. However, "The Importance of Land Settlement" merely reiterated the policy statement contained in "Plows and Peace!" But it is significant as a clue to official thinking on "agrarian reform" at this stage of the FFF's growth and as such is worth quoting at length.

The basic problem of the Filipino farmer is insufficient production and this is caused by inadequate tools and the absence of landownership among a great number of our farmers....

The most practical way to give land to the farmers is not by the expropriation and subdivision of landed estates...For... this administrative body which we have learned...(is) so susceptible to the inroads of graft and bureaucracy. Even assuming that landed estates can be expropriated and subdivided at a given time, considering the unequal factors of health, fortune and capacity of distinct and different individuals, the even distribution of the land will inevitably be destroyed after a short time! So that in order to be a leading solution the expropriation and subdivision of landed estates has to be done every so many years! But the most important objection to (this)...plan...is the fact that in our country there are thousands upon thousands of hectares of public lands fit for agriculture but idle since time immemorial! Since there are...agricultural lands unoccupied by anyone which we can give to our landless farmers, why should we force the owners of landed estates to give up their lands? Is this not unjust and immoral?

It is clear, therefore, that one of the two basic...! most important and most practical solutions to our agrarian problems is land settlement!'

This is a clear and affirmative stand against expropriation and subdivision of big landed estates. Hence it disallows any radical restructuring of the pattern of farm ownership obtaining in the Philippines. Yet by May of 1955 the FFF had made a retreat from this position. Montemayor's treatise, "The Filipino Farmer," published after the Federation's first year and one-half of operation, declares the paramount objective of the Free Farmers to be:

...the ownership by every farmer of a family¹ size farm...by the settlement of public agricultural lands or by the expropriation and subdivision of big landed² estates.

Why did the FFF feel it wise to so reverse its policy at this point with respect to a line of action called "unjust and immoral?" Perhaps the most plausible reason underlying this change was the Magsaysay regime's increased vocalization of, if not enthusiastic activity in, redistribution

1. FFF, "Importance of Land Settlement" (drafted in early 1954), pp. 1-2 (italics added)!

2. Montemayor, The Filipino Farmer, p. 47 (italics added). Also see Philippine Studies, No. 4, Vol. III, December 1955, p. 387.

of large landed estates." Moreover, the FFF was fully aware that Congressmen had commenced debate on the various versions of the Land Reform Act finally passed in its present form in September of 1955.

However, the expropriation of big landed estates was regarded as an alternative to settlement of public agricultural land and was to be undertaken solely through the channels of the Land Tenure Administration. It was not then the basic core of Federation policy as it later became in the FFF plan, "Land To The Tiller." Moreover, it was Fr. Mauri, National FFF Advisor, who took the initiative in composing the "radical" program embodied in "Land To The Tiller." Indeed Fr. Mauri was the sole author of "Land To The Tiller"; he studied the agrarian problems of the Philippines and devised their solution in the light of his own experience and training, independently and without the aid or advice of the FFF hierarchy. He likewise did research into the land tenure reform programs of other countries to see what aspects might be applicable to that which he proposed for the Philippines.

Land To The Tiller

"Land To The Tiller," first drafted by Fr. Mauri in 1956, underwent several revisions until it was printed in its present booklet form on August 15, 1957. The reform program described in "Land To The Tiller" essentially postulates that only widespread landownership can both assure economic well-being for the Filipino peasants burdened by a tenantry which has brought them only poverty, and bring social peace to a nation marked by social instability. Quoting Ramon Magsaysay in his 1953 Inaugural Address, the FFF claims his goal as its own:

Our ultimate goal is to reshape the land tenure system in such a way as to build a strong nation of small, independent and contented farm owners, free from want, protected from injustice and eager to contribute their "share" to the welfare and progress of the nation.

Raising the spectre of Communism, the FFF author of "Land To The Tiller" warns that the permanency of democracy in the Philippines, "as in Asia as a whole, can be guaranteed only if the rural populace is able to become, and can remain, a community of independent landowners. For not only is the existence of landlordism an indication of an unbalanced society with great wealth and dire poverty," but it is as well contrary to the economic best interests of the nation and incompatible

1. Seven reasons for this are listed: (1) Often big tracts of agriculturally valuable land are left idle; (2) Where the land is cultivated the landlords generally decide on single-crop farming, "this being easier for the administration; but it exhausts the soil and lowers production and does not give year-round employment; (3) The landlord, not being in close contact with the land, very often has little interest in investing for the conservation and improvement of the soil; (4) The tenants have no incentive to undertake soil improvement practices because the land does not belong to them; (5) The wealth of the barrio is drained away to the cities and the barrios become bare and undeveloped; (6) The luxury living of many landlords and the lack of buying power of the tenant favor importation of goods (luxury) instead of industrialization of the nation; and, (7) The rentier class has at

with democratic processes. Political freedom is held to be contingent upon economic freedom which the individual tenant can only attain through private ownership of his land.

Moreover, landownership is defined in "Land To The Tiller" as a natural right. In affirmation of this supposition, an excerpt from Pope Leo XIII's "Rerum Novarum XX" is quoted:

The right of property...which has been proven to belong naturally to individual persons must also belong to a man in his capacity as head of a family...which needs ownership to maintain its just liberty.

However, it is the obligation of the State, according to the FFF, to guard this right by insuring that private enterprise will not so monopolize the land as to disallow private ownership for the majority.

Nonetheless, as the FFF notes, the "just liberty" of the family is far from being realized in the Philippines. For the trend of landownership has been towards ever greater concentration of holdings.¹ New owners, it is asserted, are all too prone to lose their holdings within a few years after acquisition. This the Federation attributes to: (1) the inadequate size of individual farm plots;² (2) poor marketing facilities; and, (3) usurious lending of money. During a time of bad harvests, the small landowner may lose his farm which he has mortgaged in order to borrow crop loans at usurious rates. Some correction can be made by proper organization of marketing and credit facilities, for instance through the FaCoMas, and by a rice stabilization program which would set a floor price at harvest time and ceiling price during the rest of the year.³ As to the uneconomic size farms, the FFF admits of no ready or simple solution, the main reason being: "we cannot stop the family from increasing beyond the productive capacity of the land!" However, the FFF concludes that the farmers' land will not be lost so quickly if the cultivated area is increased and industrialization accelerated so that the land and new industries may absorb the increase in population. But above all the land must be redivided and individual holdings must be limited. Hence the existing system of land tenure with all its pernicious effects must be abolished.

the present, a gross amount of capital (more than a billion pesos) tied down to the land which could be invested in industry. (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part II, pp. 3b-3c.)

1. According to the 1948 Census of Agriculture, out of the total number of farms in the Philippines estimated at 1,638,624, there were 861,239 belonging to full-owners while part-owners accounted for 163,132; 611,971 farms were cultivated by tenants! (See Bureau of Census and Statistics, Summary Report on 1948 Census of Agriculture, p. 136.)

2. Pelzer, referring to the 1939 census, states that: "Slightly more than half of all the farms in the Philippines worked by their owners have less than two hectares of land, and slightly less than one-fourth have under one hectare..." See Karl Pelzer, Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics, p. 98.

3. FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 3.

The Philippine government through enactment of the 1955 Land Reform Law has taken steps, not to eliminate tenancy with a single stroke, but rather to reduce tenancy by restricting the size of individual landholdings. Yet, as described in "Land To The Tiller" this law, which authorizes expropriation of landed estates "in excess of 300 contiguous hectares," is basically "unsatisfactory." The following reasons are presented: (1) few estates can be expropriated as they are generally divided into separate parcels less than 300 hectares each;¹ (2) inadequate financial appropriations for the present program mean only 3,000 tenants a year can be accommodated;² (3) the law makes no provision for a subsidy and hence the tenant must pay the full amount of the land value which may be beyond his means;³ and, (4) the law authorizes the unlimited expropriation of land where there is "justified agrarian unrest." This latter proviso, the FFF points out, is "vague and therefore requires in each case extensive investigations, litigations and court decisions." Not only is this time consuming and expensive, but the FFF concludes: "It is dubious if justice is being done all the time, because on one side, the landlords may have political influence and (can) retard the investigations, (or) on the other... the laborers may be stimulated to create trouble or to revive past incidents in order to show that there has been constant justified agrarian unrest."⁴ Therefore, a new program is necessary. This is supposedly provided in "Land To The Tiller."

Basic Proposals

Family-size Farm Ownership

If the land is to be limited, it is asked, what then should be the proper size of agricultural holdings "which will ensure the maximum

1. Cited is the fact that in Pampanga 90% of the land is landlord, not farmer, owned. "There are 24 landlords averaging 1,400 hectares each and yet of the 24 landlords, 23 will go untouched." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, Introduction.) It is also pointed out that, although the original bill provided for a 150-hectare limit, "pressure by landlords among the legislators changed it to 300 hectares, thus giving a severe blow to the hopes of the farmers and to the planners of the law." "To make things worse," Fr. Mauri continues, "the legislator added the qualification 'contiguous' which means that you may legally own half of the Philippines provided that the land is divided into parcels of no more than 300 hectares each." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part II, p. XII.)

2. With 500,000 tenants, it is concluded that in 100 years current levels of tenancy may be reduced by 50%, but meanwhile "tenancy has been increasing at the rate of 10,000 tenants a year." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, Introduction.)

3. Fr. Mauri points out the fact that of all the land expropriation and redistribution programs in other countries, none have stipulated that the tenant must pay the full amount of the land value. (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, Introduction.)

4. Ibid., Part III, p. XII

welfare for the farm family in terms of income, freedom and security and which at the same time may represent the best land utilization also from the point of the law of production?"¹ Voicing the opinion of the FFF² as well as that of Pope Pius XII, Fr. Mauri concludes that the family-size farm, owned and cultivated by the family, is the ideal and he goes on to give his own specifications: "The farm should be small enough to be efficiently cultivated by a single family and big enough to give full employment to a family throughout the year and proper family income."²

Family farming, which Fr. Mauri - speaking for the FFF - calls the basis of democracy, is desirable for it assures: (1) security and self-sufficiency for the farm family; (2) proper utilization and care of the land, e.g. intensive cultivation, diversified farming, soil building practices, crop rotation, animal and vegetable raising etc.; (3) a better distribution of wealth and of buying power; and, (4) a balance of economic power.³

However, the actual size of the Filipino farm will vary according to regional differences! In Central Luzon, for example, where there is a high density of population and where marketing and urban centers are close, intensive cultivation is seen as most advisable. Generally in the upland areas, farms should be no larger than 25 hectares and for the lowlands, 12 hectares. For regions like Mindanao, sparsely populated with considerable available land and distant market centers, the retention limit is set at 60 hectares. This size is also held to be applicable for the Cagayan Valley.⁴ In each case, it must be a "limit which will be small enough to discourage landlordism and big enough to give breadth and incentive to the family farms."⁵

1. Ibid., Part I, p. 17.

2. Ibid., Part II, p. 37.

3. Ibid., Part II, pp. 2-3. Fr. Mauri does, however, admit that land-ownership must be coupled with vocational education before the tiller can be changed from "an unwilling and hopeless laborer into the most progressive and alert builder of the nation."

4. It is advised that mechanization could be an additional help to the cultivator to raise production and living standards! "Light mechanization in the heavy populated areas of Luzon and medium or heavy mechanization in the less populated areas of Mindanao may be economically advisable in the near future." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III.) In addition, it is suggested that through the FaCoMas, the farmers may be able to secure a tractor; and such machinery may also be cooperatively owned and operated.

5. FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. XI. The FFF policy of distribution, it might be noted, does not follow that now being implemented in the Philippines under the 1955 Land Reform Law whereby the tenant obtains possession of the area cultivated under the landlord. Rather it advocates division of the estates according to the above enumerated specifications. The FFF notes, however, that "many farms cultivated by tenants are practically the size that a farmer can effectively cultivate." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 3r.)

The FFF proposal does, however, make provision for commercialized farming. It is affirmed that "it would be improper for the economy of the nation to break up the highly organized plantations" of sugarcane and give it to small farmers." The same holds true of abaca, ramie, and, "to a lesser extent, coconut plantations. In this latter case the FFF suggests that the coconut land under "tenancy should be expropriated and sold to tenants on a twenty-year installment plan.¹ Too, on other commercialized farms, the government" should be authorized to buy and sell at low price to the laborers a small "home lot close to the plantation and sufficient for vegetable gardening.² In general, areas devoted to commercialized production and requiring special skills should be 124 hectares or more and family-size farms should be exclusive to food crop (chiefly rice and corn) areas." However, in view of the urgency" of the situation obtaining in "these food crop sections" heavily infested with tenancy problems, land reform here should take precedence!

There are, moreover, three extenuating provisions" in the FFF distribution scheme. For one, landlords" who are bonafide cultivators" are permitted to retain 50 hectares of their holdings! Although "this" is above the retention limit estimated in "Land To The Tiller," it" is based on the assumption that the landholder has no other fixed income and, moreover, will eventually divide the land among his heirs. Secondly, for owner-cultivators who have operated" their farms under a mechanization plan for three years, 100 hectares may be retained. There are, however, two restrictions: (1) such mechanization must not have been accomplished by displacing tenants; and, (2) laborers must have been paid the proper wages! Thirdly, small landlords and "landladies," i.e. family widows or unmarried adults, with no other source of income should be allowed to keep 25 hectares.³

Freedom Belts

The FFF has also proposed in "Land To The Tiller" a so-called "freedom belt" bordering all the major highways throughout the "Islands. No one would be permitted to own more than three hectares of land which would be some 300 meters wide spanning the national or "provincial roads - vital lines of communication and adjacent to areas most preferred by many. A subsidiary suggestion calls for protection of some 200,000 small fishermen in the Philippines whereby" "no one may" own more than 3 hectares of land in that strip of land which is comprised between the sea shore and a distance of 300 meters from the sea shore." This is envisaged as a measure giving fishermen not only a place in which to build homes, but also an area in which they may raise various food crops during the off-

1. Ibid., Part III, "p. XIV.

2. Ibid., Part III, p. 7.

3. Ibid., Part III, p. 3c. In Mindanao and the Cagayan Valley areas, 50 hectares are allowed for the ordinary landlord and 100 hectares for the owner-cultivator.

season months when the monsoon makes fishing impossible.¹

Abolition of the Lease System

The FFF land reform also advocates the abolition of the lease system with regard to public agricultural land. This system, it is asserted, has only been exploited by the rich and influential among landlords and politicians and it has, moreover, contributed to the continuance and extension of tenantry. As explained in "Land To The Tiller":

The government follows the practice of leasing large areas of agricultural land for agriculture, or forest land for tree farming. No tenant or small farmer has the financial ability nor the social prestige of obtaining any such lease. Influential people are getting it. Often in the land which is being leased there are already farmers tilling the land and they should have priority as "occupants," but since they are ignorant and they do not know how to (acquire) land titles, legally they are 'squatters.' Then the lessee comes and claims his right to share the crop. Generally at the beginning the peasants resist, not infrequently they are sent to jail for failing to pay, and finally they agree to become tenants provided that they are left on the land. According to law, after the lease has expired the lessee has priority in buying the public land. In this way tenancy is perpetuated. If in the land in question there are no squatters then the lessee will rent the land to some tenants. Very seldom the lessee himself cultivates the land.²

It is further explained that tenancy is increased by various, "less orthodox ways," such as public land grabbing or "sending dummies to claim for a share in public land." These "dummies," then "become tenants of the politicians or influential men who sent them." "Other times," the FFF affirms, "small officials claim the right to common land by declaring themselves as landless," keeping their original holdings under the names of their deceased parents. They then employ tenants after acquiring new land.³

Land, the Federation maintains, should only be awarded to those willing to cultivate it themselves. However, it is suggested that leases already awarded are not to be nullified, but priority of purchase should be cancelled. The lease system is practicable and "should remain in effect only for pasture and forest land" in which case it would not be proper to sell the land to private individuals who will use the land for agricultural purposes.⁴

1. The FFF maintains: "These fishermen who represent a very essential sector in our national economy are very often neglected and oppressed by those who monopolize the land along the sea shores." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 4!)

2. Ibid., Part I, p. 3.

3. Too, the FFF alludes to the secrecy under which all records of lands are kept so that no one, except the privileged few, can obtain information as to what land is available or, much less, how it can be acquired! (FFF, Land To Tiller, Part III, p. 6a.)

4. Ibid. Part III, p. 5.

Means of Accomplishment

Resettlement

The FFF land reform program is a combined one of resettlement, redistribution of big landed estates and industrialization. Its author estimates that approximately half of the agricultural population in Central Luzon who would be displaced with the reapportionment of landholdings would have to be shifted to new lands or into industry before the satisfactory minimum size of farms could be attained.¹ There is, in addition, a rapidly increasing population with which to contend.² However, land resettlement is only to be an auxiliary, though complementary, program to that of expropriation for it has definite limitations and cannot alone solve the agricultural problems of the Philippines.³

Resettlement by so-called "free settlers" is advocated rather than under government sponsorship. Such government projects merely serve to make the settlers "dependent and inefficient."⁴ "Free settlement" can be accomplished, the FFF declares, by constructing roads into new areas,⁵ furnishing sufficient information as to the lands available and instructions for their acquisition, aiding the settlers to open FaCoMas and

1. Ibid., Part II, p. 7.

2. The birth rate per 1,000 was estimated in 1951 to be 32.8. See Bureau of Census and Statistics, Digest of Philippine Statistics, July 1, 1952.

3. The presently cultivated area in the Philippines (6.7 million hectares in farms as of 1938 - the figure used by the FFF) may, the FFF roughly calculates, be approximately doubled. Nonetheless, even bringing under cultivation the agriculturally suited "alienable public domain" and distributing it to those employed in agriculture (15 million), the land acquired in this way would only amount to one hectare per person. And this is not considering the increase in population. (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part I, p. 1.) Hence other avenues of productive employment must be sought, chiefly in industry as discussed below. Spencer also points out that: "All data indicate that northwest Luzon, Panay, Cebu, Negros, Bohol, Leyte are reaching their saturation points. They indicate that certain sectors of Mindanao and Palawan are filling up also in spite of the enormous reserve areas still available there." (J. E. Spencer, Land and People in The Philippines, p. 41.) Too, another authority points out that sizeable areas of Mindanao - one of the primary resettlement regions - are not suitable for large-scale agricultural development owing to the roughness of the topography. (See Pelzer, Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics, p. 127.)"

4. FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part IV, p. 1.

5. Mindanao, a favored resettlement site, has an area of 36,906 square miles and a population of 2,700,000; yet it has only approximately 2,500 miles of roads. (Spencer, Land and People in The Philippines, pp. 80 and 78.) In fact "...most parts of the islands - the Central plain of Luzon and southeastern Panay perhaps excepted - do not yet possess an effective highway network." The FFF proposes to open up 3,000 km² of roads each year in order to resettle 60,000 families each year.

otherwise providing for marketing and credit facilities¹ and supplying adequate community facilities such as school houses, artesian wells, irrigation, medical clinics etc. The estimated yearly expenses for road building and community development total ₱100 million. With respect to the former, the FFF emphasizes: "It is essential that the roads be constructed by private firms under bidding." The ₱100 million is regarded by the FFF sponsor as "a sound investment" considering that the average productivity per each hectare of land brought under cultivation should be 200 pesos. Likewise, "the money invested in community development will give returns not in the form of goods but in the form of services."²

It is proposed that during the next 10 years the approximately 6 million hectares of disposable agricultural land should be brought under cultivation at the rate of 600,000 hectares per year. This will thus provide employment for the dispossessed farmers and will help to absorb the increase in population.³ Homesteads should not exceed 25 hectares so that as many farmers may be accommodated as is both feasible and economical.

When considered in a historical context, voluntary migration has never taken place on any large scale. Yet it holds greater promise of relieving overpopulation than the alternative of direct government sponsorship. Over the past few decades, for example, the number of voluntary settlers who traveled to Mindanao at their own expense was considerably greater than that of government-sponsored settlers, though no specific data is available.⁴ This exodus occurred in spite of the fact that many would-be migrants were disheartened by reports of victimization of homeseekers by usurers and landgrabbers, and despite the many obstacles encountered such as lack of adequate surveys of the public domain and

1. Even recently, as one authority notes, "the cost of clearing land and harvesting a first crop is high...With the Bureau of Lands...behind on its survey, very few new colonists can get title to their new lands, since they cannot afford private surveys and courts costs. Without title an owner-occupant cannot hope for a loan from private or government banks. His only recourse is the private lender, with all the risks consequent upon a private loan." (Spencer, Land and People in the Philippines, p. 135.) Hence the problem of adequate credit facilities to the new colonist is a particularly crucial one.

2. (Pg. 173) FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part IV, p. 3. On the whole, the problem of employment will be eased in this way for workers are needed in the construction and road-building industries. Too, new jobs will be created in government services, schools etc. (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 4.)

3. Ibid., Part IV, p. 8.

4. See Spencer, Land and People in the Philippines, p. 148! Also see Pelzer, Pioneer Settlement in The Asiatic Tropics, p. 134.

deficiencies in basic facilities, i.e.g. roads and medical centers.¹ At present, the FFF estimates that in Bukidnon province alone some 200 families per month are, of their own accord, settling in the area.²

Although government resettlement schemes have not produced the expected results, population pressures in the home province alone have not always been a sufficient inducement for voluntary migration to other less populous areas.³ But there is reasonable hope that once some of the more discouraging features of resettlement are effaced, by proper government initiative in public works, road building etc. coupled with an energetic program of opening public lands, the incentives will thus be strong enough to draw a much greater number of voluntary settlers from the overpopulated regions. However, the FFF has calculated that in ten years "there will be no further possibility of expanding our agricultural land since 40% of the land should be kept under forestry."⁴

Expropriation

The "social structural change by which each family may own its own property in an independent and self-respecting way," will be largely realized by the expropriation and redistribution of the approximately one million hectares gauged to be available.⁵ The land reform is to be a progressive one. That is to say, "only one or two provinces every

1. That there was, to some degree, an interest in colonization seems indicated by the number of persons who applied for homesteads; from 1912 to 1925 the annual increase in applicants was between 5,000 and 10,000. And from 1926 to 1930 an average of some 12,000 persons per year had submitted applications, the number dwindling to 7,000 in 1935. However, owing to a lack of surveys of the public domain (among other reasons such as failure to fulfill various requirements relating to residence and cultivation), a great number of applications (48.4% of the total) were rejected or cancelled. (See Pelzer, Pioneer Settlement in The Asiatic Tropics, p. 111.) Hence in part the government was responsible for impeding the rate of resettlement.

2. FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part I, p. 10,

3. This is suggested by the fact that, in the past, only certain dialect groups, such as the Ilocano from the northeast coast province of Luzon, have undertaken voluntary migration to any extent; this was primarily into uncultivated areas in Luzon. The Visayan also had, of his own accord, settled in the northern coastal regions of Mindanao. But the Tagalog, although residing in some of the worst congested parts of Luzon, displayed little interest in leaving his traditional habitat to engage in "pioneering." Migration did, however, receive particular stimulus under the American regime when road construction opened up some of the more inaccessible sectors. (See Pelzer, Pioneer Settlement in The Asiatic Tropics, p. 85.)

4. FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part IV, p. 1.

5. Ibid., Part II, p. 3d. This estimate is based on the 1954 survey of the Department of Finance.

year should be brought under land reform."¹ The FFF lists the following advantages of such a scheme of phased reform: (1) to adapt the land reform to local needs; (2) to gather more experience as the program progresses; (3) to avoid financial strain;² (4) to avoid cumbersome administrative machinery; (5) to eliminate the requisites of a large staff of specially trained people; and, (6) to bring the land reform first to the provinces where agrarian problems are more acute.³

Holdings will be allocated according to the various stipulations for regional family-size farms etc. Only cultivators are qualified to purchase the land, and, as a guarantee for its retention, the FFF recommends that "provisions...be made so that for a period of, say 20 or 30 years, the land cannot be sold or used as security for loans."⁴ Likewise it is considered essential to establish proper lending agencies in each locale.

Industrialization

Equally important in the FFF land reform, and a counterpart to expropriation and resettlement, is industrialization! Although the landlord looks to land as the safest investment and is reluctant to relinquish this security, yet, the FFF avows, he is the most qualified of the citizenry to develop the nation's industry. The landholders "should recognize this social obligation"; they should withdraw their capital from agriculture and reinvest it in industry. For industrialization is indispensable to the progress of the nation. Correspondingly, the government should take the initiative in providing the landlord with "sound investments in profitable industries."⁵ These industries should be decentralized and established on

1. Ibid., Part III, p. 3d.

2. The FFF claims: "From the very important point of view of the national saving and investment, the tenants becoming owners of the land, before being allowed to consume more, have to pay installments for at least 10 years! This is a tremendous saving (20%) which is going to pay the 70% of the industrial investment." (See discussion below.) "This amount of saving and investment would be practically impossible without the land reform." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 12.)

3. Ibid., Part III, p. 13.

4. Ibid., Part III, p. 17.

5. "The law," the FFF declares "should be made not only to improve the lot of the landless but also to protect as far as possible the interest of the landowners." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 11). It is suggested that ₱500 million a year be invested in industry, part of which "should pass through agriculture in order to abolish tenancy." Likewise, the FFF suggests that industrial investment be increased "at the rate of 50 million pesos a year so that the total industrial yearly investment will reach 1 billion pesos after 10 years" and in turn will make possible the opening of some 100,000 new jobs per year! This is based on the assumption that "by expanding our cultivated area in the next 10 years, we will increase our national income." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part IV, pp. 6 & 1.)

a regional basis. This would, the FFF contends, "not pauperize the provinces," but would assure a well-balanced national development.¹ It will also afford the rural inhabitants with new opportunities for employment in their locales hence increasing their income, though the labor would actually be cheaper than city labor, according to the FFF.² Such decentralization would likewise side-step the social and economic ills attending concentrated industrialization in Manila with its "immense army of industrial workers."

For a forward-looking industrialization program, the FFF proposes that the government should encourage high rates of investment through a national development tax which would siphon off what is now the luxury spending of the upper class and redirect it into more productive channels. The FFF points out that an investment of about 500 million pesos a year or some 6% of the national income is "definitely too low for a nation which needs to be developed." Yearly investments should reach from 12% to 18%. To increase investment, the FFF proposes that a cut be made, not in the already low standard of living of the laborers, but in the superfluous spending of the privileged class.³ Moreover, the government should adopt an additional income tax to be used for industrial investments. "From this tax the taxpayer can deduct all the money invested in industry so that this tax may be completely cancelled by an equivalent amount of private investment."⁴ It is hoped by such means to raise the national industrial investment (private and public) to some 12% of the national income.

Subsidization

In theory a land redistribution program should, according to the FFF Advisor, be self-liquidating. But the generally poor economic situation of the landless or tenants makes it impossible for them to pay the full amount of the land value, calculated to average P436 per hectare, even in

1. The FFF also points out that by decentralization of industry it will be easier for small investors "to participate in the investment and policy-making of the local industries." It will, moreover, "tie down to their own provinces the loyalty and the investments of the landlords thus protecting the interest of the province while the landlords are given a chance to retain the local social prestige and leadership even though they gave up their lands." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 12.)

2. The FFF has found that unemployment in the provinces has reached a total of 1,198,000 in contrast to the 136,000 unemployed in Manila - these figures being based on the Central Bank's annual report for 1954. Hence it is in the provinces that the problem should be attacked. "The real cause of increasing unemployment is not the increase of urban population but the unsatisfactory situation of agriculture." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part IV, p. 13.)

3. Ibid., Part IV, p. 7.

4. Ibid. Part IV, p. 8.

10 to 20 year installments.¹ Hence some plan for government assistance is needed which would allow, in consonance with the Philippine Constitution, a fair compensation for the land.² The FFF proposes to subsidize the land reform by utilizing the Japanese war reparations, primarily in the form of industrial goods, which are scheduled at approximately P400 million. With these reparations the FFF estimates that the government will be able to pay 30% of the land value in compensation to landlords while the tenants repay 70%. It is also suggested that a new evaluation of the land should be carried out. The landowners would be requested to assess the value of the land themselves, which assessment would be the basis both for taxation and expropriation. Too, from the amount paid by the tenants to the landlord should be subtracted the value of the crop share in excess of the legal proportion since August 30, 1954. And all unpaid taxes should be deducted from the price to be paid by the government.

Specifically, two ways of financing the land reform program are suggested by the Federation. The first, based on the supposition that the government will purchase the land for P100 million a year (or P1 billion in ten years) entails: (1) comprehensive planning aimed at developing industries in each region according to local resources; (2) instigation of an Industrial Development Company to be subsidized by 30 million pesos of Japanese reparation certificates with the government receiving in return 300,000 industrial shares at P100 value each; and, (3) government compensation to landlords in: (a) 10 million pesos in cash; (b) 30 million pesos in industrial shares;³ (c) 60 million pesos in agricultural bonds at 4% interest redeemable in 10 years. Both the 10 million pesos cash and 60 million pesos of agricultural bonds are to be repaid the government by the tenant purchasing the land on an installment basis. Nonetheless, the FFF has

1. For average land values see Bureau of Census and Statistics, Digest of Philippine Statistics, July 1, 1952. The average value per farm, including equipment etc. is estimated at P1,661. Fr. Mauri describes the tenant's situation: "supposing the value of land equal to 3 times the gross product, a tenant who has been granted the right to buy 3 hectares of land producing a total of 100 cavans every year should pay a total amount of 300 cavans or approximately 20 cavans every year during 20 years. This means that practically he remains a tenant for 20 more years" (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 12. For the FFF formula to determine land value see Part III, p. 14.)

2. Philippine Constitution, Article XIII, Section 4 states: "Congress may authorize, upon payment of just compensation, the expropriation of land to be subdivided into small lots and conveyed at cost to individuals." Hence any land reform is necessarily inhibited from "paying...an amount substantially inferior to the real value." The only other alternative is to subsidize the land reform program." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 13.)

3. The FFF adds: "If a landlord does not want the industrial shares because of the risk, the government will deposit the shares in the Central Bank and give to the landlord a guaranteed government bond at 4% annual interest redeemable in 10 years, negotiable." (FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 14.)

suggested that the government should seek loans from private individuals, national banks or the International Bank "in order to be able to pay directly to the landlords in cash."¹ Yet even this cash payment can contribute beneficially to the economic progress of the nation, the FFF argues, if the landlord is required to produce a "production certificate" showing that he has invested the money in a productive enterprise.² On the whole, this first scheme is designed to "offset the" possible inflationary effects of the reform, and "to redirect investment from land to industrial production.

The other proposal, broached with considerably less enthusiasm,³ would simply make it illegal for any citizen to own land in excess of the limits described in the land reform program. The landholder would sell his excess land to any private citizen. For any illegal retention he would be fined ₱20 per hectare after the first year "of the land reform's instigation. This amount would progressively increase with each succeeding year. The landlord may also sell to the government, the "condition being that the land go to the tenant-cultivator." The government, in this case, would be expected to put up: (1) 10% in cash; (2) "30% in industrial bonds; and, (3) 60% in agricultural bonds."⁴

To enforce these regulations, the FFF suggests the creation of land reform committees in each barrio to collect fines, "80% of which are to go to the land reform administration and 20% for improvement of the barrio. Other than this, no mention is made of the specific administrative machinery by which the reform is to be carried out.

Prospects for Adoption

"Land To The Tiller" was fully discussed during two conferences held in February and March of 1957. In attendance were Salvador Araneta - ex-secretary of Agriculture, Jaime Ferrer - Undersecretary of Agriculture, Miguel Cuaderno - Governor of the Central Bank, Frate Bull - International Cooperation Administration Land Tenure"Adviser, Eugenio Villanueva - Technical Assistant, Office of the President, and the heads of the ATC, ACCFA, LTA, Bureau of Lands and CAR. Suggestions and criticisms were proffered and some were incorporated in "Land To The Tiller." The program was later submitted to the National Economic Council for further study and" was included in a paragraph or so of the Council's final report.⁵

1. Ibid., Part III.

2. Ibid., Part III, p. 15a.

3. This proposal was made in the event that serious objections to the first should arise based on "the constitutional proviso "fair compensation." For in proposal one, partial "payment in bonds" could be construed as a denial of the landowners' constitutional rights.

4. FFF, Land To The Tiller, Part III, p. 16.

5. Information obtained from Mr. Montemayor, September 3, 1957, personal interview. Also see Evening News Report, (Manila), September 5, 1956.

Assuredly this is some index of the response elicited by the Federation and should not be disregarded. However, the FFF's scheme for agrarian reform embodied in "Land To The Tiller" is far from becoming a piece of legislation. In this respect much would depend on the political acumen of the Federation officials and their adeptness at manipulating the proper levers of influence to stimulate interest for and win acceptance of their program. The Federation would have to find some politico sympathetic to its cause as Congressional sponsor for the plan. This would be difficult enough for the Federation in its present circumstance. But to push the measure through the landlord-dominated legislature without its provisions being substantially altered would appear to be a virtual impossibility. The Land Reform Law of 1955, greatly mutilated by Philippine legislators, stands as an excellent example of what would be the probable course of "Land To The Tiller." A review of the Federation's political background as well as its present condition would, however, be relevant as a gauge of its future potentialities as a determinative political factor. For on this hinges the fate of its land reform program, and also perhaps its future existence.

Political Action

The FFF has posed its objective of agrarian reform as one best accomplished through democratic revolution - "when all the tenants and small farmers become so politically strong that the government will be really a government for the poor barrio farmers."¹ Yet regardless of the importance of such political representation to FFF goals, the organization has had a remarkably poor record as a pressure group.

Since the initial establishment of the FFF until most recently, no definitive program of political action had been charted by the Leadership. Indeed, aside from various platitudinous pronouncements deploring the condition of democracy in the Philippines and prescribing the remedy of mass action, the National FFF Directorate has evinced no clear notion of the actual functions and techniques of an agrarian pressure group nor much less how to develop a politically articulate membership. Generally the Federation has asserted its position only when circumstances forced it to do so, as in cases such as the Dimson Estate dispute or when government apathy or bureaucratic error have threatened to hamstring FFF projects! Too, almost without exception the voice of the farmer has been heard through the medium of a small elite of top-ranking FFF officers. Presuming to speak for the rank and file, they alone have defined and defended the organization's stand on each issue in the past. Yet one might ask what percentage of the FFF members have actually comprehended or shared the expressed views. On most occasions it can be presumed that the Leadership has acted without the guaranteed support of an aroused and self-knowing peasantry and perhaps without reference to any dominant opinion. Further¹ more, the Federation has been represented by its self-designated spokesmen principally among the Malacananag hierarchy and Magsaysay has been the chief contact. Occasionally the FFF has pressed its views in various

1. FFF, What is the Federation of Free Farmers, (undated).

government agencies such as the Bureau of Lands (as earlier described).¹ But in the majority of instances results were thereby obtained only when the interests of the FFF (as defined by the Leadership) happened to coincide, however temporarily, with current governmental undertakings or presidential whims. Few if any cases could be cited in which the FFF, as an independent political factor, was able to determine or alter the course of public policy.

Only on specific occasions - the Congressional debates on agricultural tenancy and land reform legislation being the most prominent - did the Federation seek to play the role of a pressure group in Congress. But even then the effort was a markedly halfhearted one despite the FFF declaration that "since the farmers comprise the vast majority of the people, they must have the loudest voice in Congress."² For during the course of legislative wrangling over the terms and basic content of the agricultural tenancy act, finally approved as R.A. 1199 in August 1954, the Federation took a notably indecisive stand. Montemayor did participate in the Senate committee hearings on the proposed act conducted by Senator Emanuel Pelaez. But while the FFF President criticized, with some justification, various of the draft's provisions, he aroused little sympathy for his views and reputedly antagonized Pelaez. His attendance at the sessions was of short duration and the Federation thereafter undertook no further lobbying.³

The FFF acted in an equally indecisive manner when the Cabili-Montano-Lopez land reform bill (one of the earlier versions of the 1955 Land Reform Act) was introduced in the Senate. The National FFF Leadership, taking notice of the proposal, drew up a resolution requesting "all Senators and Congressmen to work for the approval of the land tenure bill." Supposedly

1. In only one instance did the FFF endeavor to formalize its position in various other of the key branches of government. The Leadership presented an official memorandum to President Magsaysay requesting that he "appoint one or more representatives of tenants and small farmers to the Board of Directors of government corporations like...the NARRA, (and) the ACCFA..." (FFF Memorandum to Magsaysay, June 6, 1955.) The request, not surprisingly, was never honored, though the Federation has continued to press with considerably less enthusiasm for such appointments. It should be noted, however, that industrial labor, requesting similar representation, received strong support from Magsaysay for it had become a relatively influential political factor.

2. Montemayor, Speech delivered before the Student Catholic Action of Manila, September 26, 1954, ep. 7.

3. It is interesting to note that the FFF excused its indifference by arguing that the bill was altered so frequently in passing through the hands of various legislators and was so vague in many of its sections that it was impossible to know precisely what to sponsor. No official, the FFF claimed, was able to spend sufficient time in Congress in order to carefully study the many versions of the act and to follow its stormy course through Congress. Yet, paradoxically, once the bill was approved, the FFF leaders were to recommend that it be amended, though they had previously chosen to overlook its importance to the membership.

all FFF provincial and barrio councils were to endorse this resolution which was to be signed by the officers and addressed to their respective Congressmen and Senators. Likewise, the FFF Political Action Department was to organize a 500-man delegation to agitate in Congress for passage of the bill. However, despite considerable publicity and a brief flurry of activity, nothing materialized, all FFF efforts at lobbying, in this case as in the former, being cancelled by its failure to follow through with the scheduled plan. The FFF paid little further attention to the land reform act even during its final, most critical revision. Yet the subject matter of the bill was of direct consequence to the individual Free Farmer and a proper topic of interest to the FFF Leadership.

The FFF has squandered other opportunities such as these! For the FFF was noticeably absent from the political scene during such events as the 1956 barrio elections and the 1955 senatorial contest. In 1955 industrial labor agitated against a legislative "rider" in the Moreno Public Works Bill whereby the minimum of ₱4 for laborers would be reduced to ₱2.50 a day for those employed on public works projects - the legal wage for agricultural workers. This rider could conceivably affect FFF members in the rural areas who might enlist as laborers on such projects to supplement their meager incomes. The Federation, however, remained silent during the entire dispute, neither sympathizing with labor nor defending Moreno's contention that by lowering the wage more rural workers could be employed and more undertakings concluded. This bill was to be passed as law without Presidential signature despite the widespread antagonism of organized labor!¹

Nonetheless, during the public controversy over price support for rice the FFF came out in opposition to the plan. A memorandum, defining the FFF's position, was submitted to a presidential committee holding hearings on the proposal. The contention of the Federation Leadership was that "government support of the price of palay at ₱12.50 per cavan wouldn't help tenants, agricultural laborers and small landowners," who often live on the margin of subsistence and at best have little or no surplus to sell.² The proposed price support for palay was not approved by President Magsaysay, but it would be misleading to credit the FFF in any measure with this "victory" for, aside from several press statements and the above mentioned memorandum, the FFF did not actively press its view.

No formal lobby group as such had been organized during this time. For the only leaders with any degree of experience in political strategy have been almost wholly engaged in other FFF pursuits. Consequently, Montemayor remained the chief FFF spokesman; Too, the FFF Political Action Department which was theoretically established to organize and direct the

1. The FFF has not, however, ruled out altogether the possibility of coordinating its efforts with industrial labor whereby the two movements would lobby in Congress for some mutually beneficial law. This might be practicable, for example, where the law concerned price adjustments of farm and industrial commodity prices.

2. The Manila Times, January 11, 1957.

activities of a pressure group has only recently been given greater attention largely due to the efforts of Fernando Esguerra while he was in office. According to Esguerra "political action" must take place on the executive and legislative levels as well as during election periods. Specifically the FFF Political Action Department should be concerned with:

- (1) research on any bills before Congress relevant to the FFF membership;
- (2) circulation of propaganda in the form of letters to Congressmen defining the position of the Federation and proposing new or remedial legislation based on adequate research;
- (3) maintaining a liaison with the President and other Malacanang officials and appraising them of the FFF's current programs and projects; and,
- (4) staging of mass demonstrations (numbering several thousands) in Congress as a way of indicating popular approval or disapproval of any particular bill.

However, as one leader expressed it "the issue at the moment must be a worthy one and well chosen especially in the beginning or else it might be quite detrimental to the status and prestige of the FFF, particularly if it should backfire."¹ Too, for this same reason any mass demonstration of the proportions suggested must necessarily be very well organized and disciplined and led by proficient and experienced orators.

However, few of the above propositions have yet been translated from paper to working reality. Few concrete proposals which might offer substitutes for current Congressional bills have been prepared by FFF officials;² even "Land To The Tiller" has not advanced to the stage where it could be submitted as a bill before Congress. Too, no real attempt has been made to influence opinion-makers in key positions through a steady stream of propaganda; nor has the organization sought to promote any advantageous friendships among individual legislators. The viewpoint of the Federation, or more precisely that of its

1. Statement of FFF officials at National Convention, May 2, 1956, personal interview.

2. Three amendments to bills were prepared by the FFF but have not yet been submitted to, or sponsored in, Congress. One relates to the distribution of subsidized fertilizer through the ACCFA; the FFF-drafted amendment would supplement this scheme by allowing government distribution "thru duly registered bonafide private farm organizations..." as well as local FaCoMas. Another FFF draft "seeks to amend certain sections of the Sugar Act of 1952"; this Act "intends to protect a minimum share in favor of the planters" whereas the FFF proposal would alter this situation. But of more consequence is the FFF bill which "seeks to amend RA 1199 by adding new provisions and modifying old ones in order to clarify certain sections of the act and for other purposes in accordance with the principle of social justice in the relations between the landlord and the tenant." It would, for example, more clearly define the "end of agricultural year"; and would also make deductible from the gross harvest, the cost of hand weeding.

Headship, has been virtually unknown in Congressional circles until perhaps most recently. And what of presidential contacts? Magsaysay's untimely death in March 1957, was a great blow to the Federation; for much of the Federation's strength in the barrio was drawn from the implicit faith of the FFF farmers in the ability of the Leadership to win support for their cause in Malacanang. Should they be forced into a final "showdown" with the landed class, they believed that Magsaysay could be depended upon to intervene in their behalf. How much the loss of its chief protector will affect the Federation's future standing among the peasantry is a matter of speculation. But undoubtedly the National Leadership will find that it must secure a far greater number of substantial benefits for the membership than it has done so far if it expects to maintain its following. Yet how have the leaders assessed the situation?

From the very start, the FFF has had its goal set and clear. We actually started independent of RM, although he helped us a great deal. So, his death merely emphasizes the FFF's importance and inspires us with greater determination. We have told the people that now that RM is dead, with more reason should they strengthen themselves for the protection of their rights and the promotion of their welfare. Of course, the danger may be greater for us now and our problems more difficult to solve. But we shall go on.¹

Nonetheless, the Federation has done little to fortify itself against future contingencies of this nature. For it has failed, among other things, to develop any personal contacts in Malacanang among those who have succeeded to the administrative posts once occupied by the Magsaysay coterie. Indeed, the Garcia regime has been noticeably unresponsive.²

However, the fact that the FFF, through its Political Action Department, did take an active part in the 1957 elections offers some encouragement. At stake in these elections were not only the offices of President and Vice-President, but also some eight Senatorial seats and all 102 seats in the House of Representatives. During the period of intense, pre-election campaigning, the Federation invited the various candidates³ to

1. Letter from FFF to writer, May 24, 1957r

2. As the FFF admits: "We do not have very much contact with Garcia and his administration. Now and then we go to him. He is helpful to a very limited extent. Garcia is slow and surrounded by corrupt officials." (Letter from FFF to writer, June 1958.)

3. Among the presidential candidates were Carlos Garcia - former Nacionalista Vice-President under Magsaysay and the ultimate victor in the contest, Manuel Manahan - an independent of the new Progressive Party, Jose Yulo of the Liberal Party and Senator Claro Recto of the Nacionalista-Citizens party.

Speak before barrio assemblies of FFF members in order to present their political views on a variety of issues.¹ Also for the first time the Federation presented "questionnaires" to each of the candidates. These were divided into sections dealing with: (1) Tenancy Law; (2) Land Reform; (3) Minimum Wage Law; (4) Greater Production; (5) Government Representation; (6) Cooperatives and Credit; and, (7) Price of Palay. Some twenty-six questions were asked pertaining to these issues.² Each series of questions was prefaced by the statement:

The Federation of Free Farmers would like to cooperate with you in making the coming elections fully successful - for our country, for our people, for democracy, and for you. In order to accomplish this, the people must know the stand of all the candidates on important matters so that they will be in a position to vote intelligently. We presume that on your part, you would be glad to have your stand, attitudes, and plans brought to the people, to the voters.³

The questionnaires, once completed and returned to the Federation, were to be reproduced in the dialects for distribution to all voters in the rural areas and were also to be published in newspapers and magazines. This supposedly would provide the basis for the individual farmer's vote. Once elected to office, the legislator or official could be confronted at any time with his signed statement on any issue should he renege on his promises to the electorate. However, few questionnaires were returned and likewise few were reprinted in the dialect for the peasants' reference. In fact only eighteen candidates

1. The Manila Times, July 22, 1957, described one of these meetings at which Jose Yulo together with vice-presidential aspirant, Diosdado Macapagal, made an appearance. "Speaking before 8,000 farmers in a rally sponsored by the Federation of Free Farmers in Concepcion town (Tarlac), Yulo received an enthusiastic ovation when he mentioned...his farm...where there had never been a strike since he took over its management... The Concepcion rally coincided with the graduation of 35 farmer trainees who took up a leadership course. Yulo distributed diplomas to the graduates."

2. The following are samples of the type of questions asked of the candidates: "Do you have any Land Reform Program which you intend to implement. please explain?" "Some of the causes of rural poverty and agrarian unrest are smallness of farms, high tenant frequency, oppressive farm rentals, inadequate family farm income and usury. What remedial action will you take to solve these problems?" "What will you do about the flagrant violation of the Minimum Wage Law by sugar planters in Negros Occidental?" "Will you work for the increase of the Minimum Wage for agricultural laborers?"

3. FFF Questionnaire To All Candidates, 1957.

replied - one presidential (Manahan); two vice-presidential (Vicente Araneta of the Progressives and Lorenzo Tanada of the Nacionalista-Citizens Party) and fifteen congressional aspirants.¹ In view of the poor response, the FFF decided to publicize the fact that some candidates were unwilling to state their positions on issues considered very vital to the concerns of the membership, hoping thereby to force some acknowledgement from the politicians - a vain attempt. Apparently the politicians assumed that the Federation was not yet a significant element in the political process.

1. Disclosed by Romeo Santiago, Head of the FFF Political Action Department in a Sentinel interview. (See Sentinel, October 19, 1957r The replies of the candidates were published in this issue.)

VII CONCLUSION

Judging from the foregoing, the Federation can hardly claim to be an organization through which the farmers can impose their will on government officials, so that these officials will never forget their promises, so that these officials will work for the welfare of the common people, so that these officials will be the servants and not the masters of the people.¹ The Federation has, however, labored under a number of handicaps; some are strictly of its own making, others derive in part from the socio-political conditions prevailing in the Philippines.

The Federation, as it is now constituted, can offer no real counter-balance to the preponderance of landed interests in the government who occupy, in terms of economic strength and political prestige, a vastly superior bargaining position. There is in fact no genuine farmers' representative now in Congress or in Malacanang. Occasionally some politician will ostensibly champion the cause of the peasantry out of political motives; for due to the influence of Magsaysay, "helping" the barrio populace, in words if not in deeds, has become both fashionable and expedient. Hence during election times the people are told what they want to hear and each and every candidate offers some vague promise of "agrarian reform" which is soon forgotten for all practical purposes once they have assumed office. For "public opinion," other than that of the landed and professional classes, is often unformed and without the proper mechanisms for its transmission. Thus it cannot fully serve as a political conditioner and aside from this there are few, if any, ways of holding the politician responsible to the masses.

However, it should be noted that industrial labor, having achieved a certain degree of solidarity, has been able to reinforce its own bargaining position of late by the threat of withholding votes from those not in its camp. Though it has refused to ally itself with any political party, it has nonetheless followed the policy of "rewarding friends and opposing enemies" in each of the major parties. The Federation has, on the other hand, steered a much more neutral course; adhering to the principle of political non-partisanship, it has remained aloof and on the whole has eschewed any active involvement in the political-legislative process. But in any case the FFF has never commanded sufficient power or organized backing at any time to convince those in government that their political lives might be jeopardized in the future should they disregard the Free Farmers' demands.

1. Montemayor, Speech delivered before the Second International Rural Youth Conference in Beirut, Lebanon, August 27, 1957, p. 6.

Not only is the Federation numerically weak - 50,000 members accounted for little more than one percent of the vote in the previous elections - but it is also organizationally and "psychologically" unstable. For the extremely overcentralized structure of the FFF has worked against the establishment of conditions which would develop an enlightened and capable grass roots leadership and, in turn, a militant and politically articulate rank and file. The Federation is tightly controlled by a small group of highly vulnerable lawyer-leaders - an intellectual elite who remain, to a great extent, removed in experience, feeling and understanding from the masses. Though all the constituent, far-flung units of the FFF are consequently forced to look to this central executive as the real seat of power and decision, there is no actual cohesion among the membership nor singleness of purpose. But it cannot be expected that the FFF peasants will act in unison to demand their rights unless they feel themselves to be both physically and psychologically an inseparable part of one united, and therefore powerful organization. Yet only by speaking as one will they eventually be able to command the attention of those in government who make and execute public policy.

The FFF plainly lacks the firm foundation of popular roots which, in the main, only democratic elections among the rank and file can give. Until then the FFF can scarcely hope to function as a stable, coherent mass organization. Democratization of the FFF will, nonetheless, require fundamental changes in its composition and constitution which will redirect the flow of power. This in turn demands a reappraisal by the FFF rulers of the essential nature of a mass agrarian union; they must first disabuse themselves of the notion that the rank and file are unprepared and unable to both govern themselves and to decide in which direction their basic interests lie. A Local Leadership must be thoroughly trained and likewise invested with the authority to determine policy and direct activity. For without opportunities for practical experience, leadership training is meaningless. Moreover, full participation of the membership on all levels of the FFF pyramid must be permitted and actively encouraged. But will the National FFF rulers be willing to yield their now absolute sovereignty to the majority? - perhaps only when they can be assured of popular support of their leadership. Yet the alternatives to democratic organization are apt to be devitalization and disintegration of the Federation and an eventual collapse of its entire barrio program.

This in turn raises a further question concerning the practicability of the FFF's many-sided approach to the problem of agrarian reform. Up to the present time, the FFF has been demonstrably unable to produce any concrete or lasting results in its many spheres of endeavor. Dismayingly short of funds and efficient administrative personnel, structurally top-heavy and lacking systemization, the National Federation has nevertheless unwisely expended its meager resources in a multitude of unrelated rural projects which, as a net result, have accomplished little. It is true that the Federation has rendered valuable assistance to FFF tenants through legal defense of their

interests in tenancy disputes, and in cases of resettlement, land redistribution, homestead and mining title claims, etc. Yeti such aid has actually benefited only a few FFF members, while the majority remain unattended. This is even more true with respect to the various rural amelioration programs - cooperatives, medical clinics, agricultural extension services, artesian wells, barrio roads, school houses and the like - which the FFF has undertaken. These are indeed necessary in alleviating some of the hardships of rural life. Likewise newly emerged farm owners are liable to fall back into tenancy unless far-reaching changes can be effected in correlated aspects of rural society. But important though these enterprises are in theory, they more properly belong to other specialized groups and agencies. For in many instances such programs, to be at all meaningful, require large outlays of capital which normally only the government is capable of providing. Too, one must not overlook the host of private and civic organizations which are contributing a good measure of assistance towards improvement of rural conditions in the way of handicraft centers, educational and recreational facilities, expert advice on techniques of agricultural production, credit associations, community development projects etc.¹ These groups are on the whole far better equipped, financially and administratively, to carry on such activities in the future than is the FFF which could nonetheless render some help in propagandizing the farmers.

However, these measures of rural amelioration are not in themselves an adequate answer to rural discontent. For first and foremost the tenant's land hunger must be satisfied. As one authority asserts: "Without effective action to give him a chance for farm ownership the tao is apt to be indifferent to other types of reform and will remain a threat to social stability."² It is here that the Federation's potential significance, as a mass agrarian organization desiring an end to tenantry, becomes more apparent. It is reasonable to suppose that in the long run the Federation could serve the interests of its membership much more effectively as an agrarian pressure group able to demand redress through concerted mass action. Hence the FFF national leaders must necessarily concentrate their main efforts on realization of this potential by the measures described above. For under the existing circumstances the Federation has no hope of winning Congressional or Presidential approval for its program of "Land To The Tiller." Yet the Leadership, refusing to take into consideration the realities of its present position, affirms: "...we hope to bring (the program)...to the masses on whom we

1. Take for example the Liberty Well Association which was able to raise more than \$300,000 in one year alone. Too, as one authority notes: "At the end of the first year of the new administration 1,300 new artesian wells had been installed." (See R. A. Smith, Philippine Freedom 1946-1958, p. 182.)

2. Hunt, Sociology in The Philippine Setting, p. 61

shall depend for the mass support necessary to push through a legislation."¹

Yet once converted into a democratic and dynamic peasants' union, the Federation would still find it extremely difficult to secure the legislation of "Land To The Tiller" in its present form, much less its successful implementation. For the Federation has proposed the expropriation and redistribution of practically all agricultural land not tilled by the farmer and his immediate family; an estimated 80,000 or more "caciques" would thereby be affected. Thus the FFF program directly threatens the interests of a firmly entrenched and dominant landed aristocracy whose status is guarded carefully by the state. All previous Philippine "mass" movements claiming agrarian reform as their "raison d'être" have been wholly unable to unseat this class from its all-powerful position in the government and in society. Perhaps if the Federation were to carry out an internal revision along the lines suggested above, it would have a better chance of winning the battle than its predecessors. Yet in any case it is highly questionable that any total reform which would reach deeply down into the very foundations of rural society can be initiated and pushed through to real completion unless the contemporary governing elite is replaced with a group genuinely concerned with the public welfare. For present Philippine political regimes have not indicated thus far that they possess either the administrative integrity or the political morality necessary to deliver, as Magsaysay vainly promised, "the substance of democracy to the people."

Within this socio-political framework, what then are the future possibilities of the Federation of Free Farmers? To sustain the enthusiasm and confidence of the peasant and hence the vigor of the movement which at times has already begun to wane, it will be absolutely essential to push through real reform. If not, the rank and file are certain to become demoralized and disillusioned with promises of land that are never fulfilled. In fact, the Federation is apt to be reduced in scope to a legal aid clinic for impoverished tenants.

Then again, if "democratic revolution" proves ineffective as a formula for gaining full political representation and if the Federation's goal of agrarian reform is consequently frustrated by vested interests in the government, the National Leadership may turn to direct involvement in partisan politics using the local Federation as their base of support. This is more likely in the event that the Federation retains at its help a lawyer elite whose orientation is more political than that of the peasant membership. But at any rate, the Federation is liable to become more closely identified with one party label or the other in the course of winning representation and this may, in turn, permit outside political manipulation of the Leadership.

1. Letter from FFF to writer, February 20, 1957.

Likewise there is always a danger of ecclesiastical control of the organization. Such control would very probably subvert the essential nature and aims of the FFF, reducing it eventually to an auxiliary of the Catholic Church. But, in order that the FFF's title as "a national, independent, private, lay, non-political organization" shall be more than a convenient fiction, the Federation must be free and able to define its relationship with the Church, as well as with political parties, exclusively in terms of its own purposes and interests.

For the present, however, no basic transformation nor decisive shift in direction is likely to take place in the Federation which most probably will continue to play the role of defender for the peasantry. Yet it is hoped that if the Free Farmers movement cannot be the prime mover in a fundamental social reorganization, it can at least provide an impetus for change.

APPENDIX

I

MANIFESTO

of the

FEDERATION OF FREE FARMERS

Beloved Tiller of the Soil:

You are the most important worker in the world. You produce the food and the force that cause the buildings in the towns and cities to rise, the wheels of industry to turn, the carriers of trade to run, the hand of government to sway, and the pen of learning to move - nay, that cause life itself to go on in this world.

Specially you, farmer of the Philippines: You are the most important person in the country. Because of the absolutely essential nature of your task as well as by virtue of your great number, you are the backbone of the nation.

If you are sick, the nation cannot be healthy; if you are ignorant, the nation cannot be informed; if you are destitute, the nation cannot find contentment; if you are a slave, the nation cannot be free; if you grieve, the nation cannot be happy.

Many people, however, do not see this important truth, or seeing it, nevertheless refuse to act upon it. This, your primary importance, is often belittled and your rights disregarded - to the great misery of the nation. For the sake of the nation, therefore, as well as for your own sake, your importance must be recognized and your rights respected. You must be made healthy and informed and contented and free and happy, so that the nation will also be healthy and informed and contented and free and happy.

Acting alone, you cannot bring this about, for you are weak. But if you unite with all the other tillers of the land you will bring it about in no time, for then you will have not only truth and justice on your side but also the irresistible strength of numbers.

You must therefore unite under a common purpose, and act with system and coordination so that you will be able to accomplish your common end in the best possible manner.

This is your paramount end - to attain eternal happiness with God in Heaven. But for you to attain this, you must live as God wants you to live on this earth. On this earth God wants you to have enough food to eat, decent clothes to wear and a roof over your head. God wants you to raise and educate

your sons and daughters in health and reasonable comfort. God wants you to live well, and living well, serve Him welli

But you do not live welli No matter how hard you work, you do not have enough food to eati You do not have decent clothes to weari You do not have a decent house to live in. Your children are sick. Your children are unschooledi

This is the motive that impels us - that we may, insofar as God has placed it in our power to do, help put things in the order God wants them to be, and thus merit His love and mercyi

Tiller of the soil, since it is your task to produce food for men to eat, you are entitled to all that is necessary to enable you to produce sufficient food for all.

Tiller of the soil, you are a human being created in the image and likeness of Godi Hence, you are entitled to all that is necessary for a life in keeping with your dignity as a human beingi

In order to produce enough food and live with dignity, you must own sufficient land and adequate tools with which to work the landi This is your basic need and we shall direct all our efforts to the satisfaction of this need as our ultimate objectivei The accomplishment of this objective would involve, among other things, the settlement of idle lands of which we have so much in our country, the adoption of modern tools and modern means of production, such as mechanization, fertilizer, irrigation, seed selection, pest control, and the establishment of home industriesi But all these will necessarily take timei Hence, you must have patience and faith in God who always crowns an honest man's effort with the wonders of His bountyi

Meanwhile, besides the fact that you may not own the land which you cultivate and that the crop that you produce in your field would not be enough if it all went to you, your difficult life is made much more difficult by the greed oppression of some other people who take advantage of your poverty and weaknessi We shall uphold and defend your rights against oppression and injusticei

In pursuing our legitimate ends we may be met with opposition and even hatredi We shall never lack courage and constancyi But it is good for us to remember that there are many people who truly love us; and it will profit us more to think of the kindness of those who love us; than to brood over the oppression of those who hate usi

So we shall not look upon anyone as our enemy, but we shall regard as our brothers redeemed by the blood of a common Saviour, confronted with common problems and faced with the common task of making this earth a prosperous and happy place to live ini We shall, therefore, promote cooperation rather than conflict, harmony rather than discord, love rather than hatei

Farmers of the Philippines, unite! United, you can lift your eyes with hope - for the future is in your hands.

Manila, Philippines, October 25, 1953
Feast of Christ the King

APPENDIXII

CONSTITUTION

of the

FEDERATION OF FREE FARMERS

P R E A M B L E

We, the farmers of the Philippines, realizing our primary importance to the nation, and our grave obligation to unite ourselves in order to strengthen our country, hereby adopt this constitution of the Federation of Free Farmersa

Article I

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

Section 1. Because the farmer produces the food without which men cannot live; he is the most important worker in the world.

Section 2. By virtue of the absolutely indispensable nature of their task, as well as their great number, the Filipino farmers are the backbone of the nationa

Section 3. If the farmer is poor the nation cannot be rich, if the farmer is weak the nation cannot be strong, if the farmer is a slave the nation cannot be freea

Section 4. In order to strengthen the nation, the farmer must be strengthened; in order to strengthen the farmers they must unite and organize themselvesa

Section 5. Since the farmer is a human being, he has the right to all that is necessary to enable him to live in keeping with his dignity as a human being; since it is his task to produce food for men to eat, he has the right to own sufficient land and adequate tools and all that is necessary to produce enough food for all.

Section 6. In fulfillment of his duties and enforcement of his rights; the farmer must have wisdom, courage and constancy, but he should likewise practice justice and charity and look upon all other people as his brothersa

Article II

AIMS AND PURPOSES

Section 1. To unite and organize all the small farmers throughout the Philippinesa

Section 2. To act as a weapon of common defense for its members

Section 3. To serve as an instrument of peace between its members and other groups, particularly between tenants and landlords

Section 4. To act as a bridge to bring the government and the people closer to each other

Section 5. To provide an effective voice in the government for its members by enlightened and united action.

Section 6. To act as a medium of information and education for its members

Section 7. To teach and encourage its members to adopt improved methods of production, and to organize cooperatives

Section 8. To promote democracy and freedom; to check communist infiltration and subversion.

Section 9. To exert effort to the end that every farmer will own at least a decent home and a home lot

Section 10. To promote understanding, cooperation, and coordination between the Federation and other groups here and abroad

Section 11. To call upon other organizations and individuals to extend material and other aid to the members of the Federation

Section 12. To acquaint other groups of the conditions and problems of the members and to promote good public relations

Section 13. To promote in any way the physical, material and spiritual well-being of its members

Article III

MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

Section 1. The following are qualified to become members of the Federation of Free Farmers:

- a) Agricultural tenants;
- b) Small landowners who till the land themselves, including independent saltmakers, poultry and other livestock raisers under employment;
- c) Fishpond laborers and persons engaged in fishing; and
- d) Prospective farmers

Anyone who has tenants or employees in connection with any agricultural or fishing enterprise is disqualified from becoming a member of the Federation.

Section 2. A qualified person becomes a member upon signing the application prepared for that purpose and upon issuance to him of a membership cardc

Section 3. Any member may be suspended or expelled for the cause in accordance with procedure to be determined by the Municipal or Central Chapter concerned; but the person concerned has the right to appeal to the Provincial Association and from the Provincial Association to the National Executive Officec

Section 4. Before the issuance of the membership card to the applicant he shall pay P1.00 for the identification booklet and as membership fee, payable to the local Treasurer who will issue a corresponding receiptc

Section 5. Every member shall pay annual dues of P3.60 within the first quarter of each year to the local Treasurer who shall issue a corresponding receipt and stampc

Section 6. All money collected shall be deposited in a bank in the name of the FFF to be disposed of when necessary and accounted for in the manner to be laid down from time to time by the National Executive Officec In every case all collections and disbursement shall be for the greatest interest of the members of the Federationc

Article IV

GENERAL ORGANIZATION

Section 1. The smallest organizational unit is the Barrio or Hacienda Local, composed of members in the same barrio or haciendac

Section 2. All Barrio or Hacienda Locals in one municipality or Central shall constitute the Municipal or Central Chaptersc

Section 3. All organized Municipal and Central Chapters in one province shall constitute the Provincial Association.

Section 4. All organized Provincial Associations shall constitute the Federationc

Section 5. A Provincial Association shall become such upon being granted a Chapter* by the National Executive Office of the Federation, when the province has been more or less fully organized, a provincial election held and members thereof have paid their duesc

Section 6. Before a province is granted a Chapter,* the initial organization of members and units and all their activities therein shall be under the direction of the National Executive Officec

* This should read Charter instead of Chapter.

Section 7. Upon the granting of such Chapter,* the Provincial Association shall become an autonomous unit of the Federation to the extent specified in the Chapter, but always subject to the national policies and regulations of the Federationr

Section 8. Before the grant of a Provincial Charter, neighboring towns and Centrals may be temporarily organized into districtsr

Section 9. For purposes of coordination and efficiency, a number of contiguous or adjacent provinces may be grouped into a Regionr

Section 10. Upon the grant of a Charter and subject to the specifications therein, the Provincial Association shall determine the structure and operation of the Chapters, Locals and other units under its jurisdiction.

Section 11. Special organizational arrangements for agricultural laborers, saltmakers, poultry and livestock raisers, fishermen and fishpond workers, may be provided by the National Executive Officer

Article V

THE NATIONAL POLICY BOARD

Section 1. The principal function of the National Policy Board is the formulation of national policies for the Federation.r

Section 2. The present original members of the National Policy Board shall be permanent and cannot be removed except by death, incapacity, resignation and expulsion by the permanent members of the said Board.

Section 3. The permanent membership in the National Policy Board may be diminished, replaced or increased by the permanent members thereofr

Section 4. As soon as a Provincial Association is granted a Charter, it shall elect a representative to the National Policy Board, which representative shall be a member of the Board for a definite and limited period of timer

Section 5. As soon as the education of the leaders and members and the conditions of security will render it practicable upon the determination of the National Policy Board, membership in said Board shall be as representative as possible of all the members of the Federationr

Section 6. The National Policy Board shall draft its rules and regulations for its own organization and operation in matters not herein otherwise provided forr

* This should read Charter instead of Chapterr

Article VI

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Section 1. The National Executive Office shall execute the policies formulated by the National Policy Board.

Section 2. The National Executive Office shall be composed of: President, Executive Vice-President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and such other officers or members as the National Policy Board may choose.

Section 3. No person shall become an officer or member of the National Executive Office unless he is an officer or member of the National Policy Board.

Section 4. All the officers and members of the National Executive Office shall be chosen by the National Policy Board.

Section 5. The National Executive Officials and members shall hold office for one year and until their successors shall have been duly elected and qualified; provided, however, that the first officers elected after the approval of the Constitution shall hold office until the third Saturday of October, 1957.

Section 6. All the other officers and members of the National Executive Office shall be responsible to the National Policy Board.

Article VII

INCORPORATION AND REGISTRATION

Section 1. For the purposes of incorporation, the members of the National Policy Board shall be the members of the corporation.

Section 2. The members and officers of the National Executive Office shall likewise be the members and officers of the Board of Directors of the corporation.

Section 3. Whenever it will be wise and proper for certain members to form a labor union, they may do so, registering in the proper government office and under such proper organizational arrangements within the Federation as the National Executive Office may lay down.

Article VIII

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE OFFICIALS

Section 1. The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Federation, and, as such, shall have general supervision of its affairs. He shall see to it that this Constitution as well as the rules and regulations that may be

made as herein provided, are complied with, and that all the officers and employees of the Federation perform their duties. He shall represent the organization on all occasions and in all matters where representation may be required or agreed upon, either by himself or through one authorized by him. He shall likewise exercise such powers and duties as shall be agreed upon by the National Policy Board or the National Executive Office.

Section 2. The Executive Vice-President shall take the place of the President in case of absence or disability of the latter to perform the duties of the office. He shall also perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the National Policy Board or the National Executive Office.

Section 3. The Vice-President shall perform the duties and exercise the powers of the President in the absence or disability of the President and the Executive Vice-President. He shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the National Policy Board or the National Executive Office.

Section 4. The Secretary shall attend all meetings of the National Policy Board and the National Executive Office, prepare and keep the minutes of such meetings, give notice of the time and place of meeting, have custody of the records and seal of the corporation, send to all provincial presidents copies of the Constitution and other papers and keep the roll of the members up-to-date.

Section 5. The Treasurer shall receive the account for any income, contribution or donation that any person or association may give to the Federation and shall collect, and upon direction of the National Executive Office, disburse the corporation's funds and conduct correspondence relating thereto, keep bills of accounts showing all financial transactions of the Federation and submit to the Board within the first five days of every quarter a statement of the assets and liabilities of the Federation, all of which he shall post or cause to be posted in the corporation's bulletin Board for the information of the members. At the end of his term, he shall, upon proper receipt, deliver to his successor, who has qualified as herein provided, all the money and properties of the corporation under his care and all papers bearing on or connected therewith. The receipt signed by his successor shall also be attached to the record.

Article IX

LEADERSHIP

Section 1. Membership is not a pre-requisite for anyone to become an official or leader of the Federation; but as soon as a person becomes an officer or leader he automatically becomes a member of the Federation.

Section 2. Officials and leaders shall be either appointed or elected; and in the appointment or election of officials or leaders, the moral character of the person to be appointed or elected shall be primarily considered by the appointing or electing power.

Section 3. The religion of the person shall not be considered in his appointment or election; but no positive atheist, irreligious person, communist or fascist, shall become an official or leader of the Federation.

Section 4. The National Executive shall adopt a system of MIS and other clearance of officers and leaders of the Federation.

Section 5. Save in rare and exceptional cases to be determined by the National Policy Board, any official or leader of the Federation shall cease to be such from the moment he runs for an elective government office or receives appointment to a government office and cannot again become an official or leader of the Federation until after one year following his defeat or until after the termination of his office; but this provision shall not apply to city and barrio councilors as well as city and barrio officials not higher in rank than councilors.

Section 6. The promotion, demotion, suspension or dismissal of any appointed or elected official or leader not lower in rank than a provincial officer shall be determined by the National Executive Office; but when the person concerned is a member of the National Executive Office, the power to determine belongs to the National Policy Board.

Article X

PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION, MUNICIPAL CHAPTER AND BARRIO LOCALS

Section 1. The Provincial Associations shall be under the direct supervision of the National Executive Office and shall follow all the policies laid down for them by said office. Each Provincial Association shall formulate its own By-Laws in consonance with, and in order to carry out, the Constitution and purposes of the Federation. Said By-Laws shall be subject to the approval of the National Executive Office.

Section 2. The By-Laws of each Provincial Association shall provide for its officers, organization, funds, and all property falling under its jurisdiction.

Section 3. The Municipal or Central Chapter shall be under the direct supervision of the Provincial Association. However, the National Executive Office may intervene in any affair, case, problem, or operation when it deems it proper and convenient but always in consultation and coordination with the Provincial officials concerned.

Section 4. The Barrio or Hacienda Local is under the direct supervision of the Municipal or Central Chapter

Section 5. In exceptional cases to be determined by the National Executive Office, said office may intervene in any matter, case, problem and operation in any Barrio or Hacienda Local, but as much as possible in consultation with the Local, Chapter and Association Officials concerned.

Section 6. As soon as the education of the members and the conditions of security will allow it, all the Barrio, Municipal and Provincial Units shall elect their own officers

Section 7. In any matter not provided for, the decision shall lay in the National Executive Office, but said office shall determine the mind of all the leaders and members and shall decide accordingly whenever it thinks that the matter requires and circumstances allow such determination

Article XI

AMENDMENTS

Section 1. This Constitution may be amended at any regular or special meeting called for the purpose by a two-thirds majority of all the National Policy Board.

Section 2. Upon all questions of construction of this Constitution, the decision of the National Policy Board shall control

Article XII

EFFECTIVITY

This Constitution shall become effective as soon as it is approved by the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of all the members of the National Policy Board.

APPROVED, November 17, 1956:

Jeremias U. Montemayor

Tirso L. Castro, Jr

Reynaldo L. Alcantara

Teodoro M. Sison

Segundo T. Gonzales

Fernando Esguerra

Antonio Abibuag

Norberto Arcangel

Antonio M. Diaz

APPENDIX

III

THE ROLE OF THE PRIEST IN THE FEDERATION OF FREE FARMERS

The priest acts as Chaplain and Adviser

As Chaplain, he has the following functions:

1. To strengthen the moral and spiritual character of the leaders of the Federation of Free Farmers, the ultimate objective being to make every leader understand fully the spiritual significance of the movement, inspire him with missionary zeal, and help maintain him at all times in the state of grace;

2. To promote the spiritual welfare of the members of the Federation of Free Farmers;

3. To constantly remind the leaders of the FFF of important moral principles involved in their work, and on proper occasions to advise them when they violate these principles; and

4. To plan and establish a system by which to dissuade any leader of the Federation of Free Farmers from doing anything, either in his capacity as an official of the FFF or in his private life, that might harm the reputation or the work of the FFFi

As Adviser, he has the following functions:

1. To advise and guide FFF leaders in matters of organization, to the end that the FFF will have a definite organizational structure that will have (sic) insure stability, solidity and organic dynamism;

2. To advise and guide the FFF leaders in matters of leadership training in rural areas, specially among the youth.

3. To give advice and guidance on the economic projects of the FFF, like cooperative, credit unions, farm management, agricultural finance, etc;

4. To advise FFF leaders on the political policies of the FFF when such policies specially involve important moral principles;

All chaplains and advisers will coordinate their plans and activities with Rev. Hector Mauri, S. J., National Chaplain and Adviser, with office address at the National Office of the Federation of Free Farmersi

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