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The Secretary of Education on Indecent Literature

Campion Literary Guild

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THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION ON INDECENT LITERATURE *

In the few public statements that I have made since my appointment as Secretary of Education, I have stressed two principles which I believe to be fundamental to the educational policy of our government. The first is, that public education is the concern, not only of professional educators, but of the public. The second is, that education is impossible without the teaching of clear moral principles based on religious truth. This afternoon, I wish to bring out the relevance of these two principles to the subject at hand, namely, decent literature.

When I say that public education is the concern of the public, I mean that the decisive factor in the formation of the government's educational policy must be the legitimate needs and desires of the people as a whole. The reason for this is that the people are paying for that system, and this seems to my simple mind a very good reason why they should have the final say as to how that system should be run.

Now I do not think there can be any doubt that our people place a very high value on moral conduct and religious belief. It may be that in other countries unrestrained individual freedom is considered of greater importance than right conduct according to the law of God as manifested by natural reason and Christian revelation. It may be that some professional educators who have received their professional training

* This is an address given by the Secretary of Education, Pastor M. Endencia, in a radio program sponsored by the Campion Literary Guild.

in those countries would advocate the scrapping of our traditional code of morality and our deepest religious convictions for the sake of a concept of individual freedom foreign to our character, customs and history. But these educators are not the public, and therefore they ought not to be permitted to decide what the public must and must not have in the way of education. This is something which the people themselves must decide.

If we ask the ordinary Filipino citizen what kind of education he wants for his children, we can be pretty sure what his answer will be, because we ourselves belong to this category of ordinary Filipino citizens. He will say that he wants his child to learn how to read and write and be a peaceful, and useful member of his community; but above all, how to be a good man or woman who loves God above all things, and his neighbor as himself for the love of God. It is this quality of goodness based on religious faith and moral conviction that we have learned to admire in our own parents, and which we desire to transmit to our children.

But not all education is formal education. Our young people do not get their education merely from the teacher in the classroom, but from everything that they see, hear and read around them. They get it from the billboard signs scattered throughout our cities, from the movie advertisements in the newspapers; from the picture magazines that are sold in the streets; from the novels, plays and stories in our bookstores and libraries. Let me ask you whether the code of conduct advocated or implied in these books, magazines and advertisements is that according to which you want your son or daughter to live.

The set of educational objectives formulated by the Joint Congressional Committee on Education in 1948 does not leave room for doubt as to the high ideals of our people in the education of our young. The implementation of these objectives is a national obligation and devolves on every member of the community. Since literature, that is, printed books, magazines, periodicals and the like, constitutes one of the most powerful mass media of education, all are under grave obligation to safeguard our young from such types of reading

matter as will not only destroy their minds and hearts but will rob them of the rich heritage of our national traditions and lead them to a way of life that is un-Filipino.

The first objective embodied in a concurrent resolution of Congress in 1948 formulated by the Joint Congressional Committee on Education states: "It shall be the function of educative agencies in the Philippines to teach our people: To live a moral life guided by Faith in God and love for fellowmen." A considerable portion of the literature made available to our young people by our libraries, bookstores and magazine stands is not only contrary to the moral traditions of our people but is downright immoral and destructive of faith in God and right love for fellowmen and completely inimical to our young people.

The Fifth Objective of our National Education is: "To maintain family unity, live a happy home life and discharge efficiently domestic responsibilities for worthy home membership." This objective expresses one of the most outstanding characteristics of the Republic—Filipino Family and Home. And yet how can we hope to preserve the beauty and integrity of our Filipino Home and train our young to be responsible members of society through worthy home membership, if the literature they read forms in their minds ideals of free love, easy divorce, adultery and abortion, of immoral relationships between the sexes and uproots all those traditions that make our Home—centered as it is on Filipino womanhood—pure and virtuous?

Another Objective of Our National Education is to train our young: "To spend leisure wisely and in order to attain self-realization and contribute to the welfare of the community." This objective is hard to attain through a mass medium of education such as literature which does not serve to train the mind, memory, understanding and imagination for active and creative functions but only serves to blunt their development and vitiate their use. There can be no self-realization except through the controlled and well directed self-activity of the individual student. Current literature unless well chosen is not conducive to such a training.

Still another objective of our National Education is to train our young: "To appreciate the arts and letters and attain self-fulfillment by enriching them with contributions distinctly Filipino."

This is indeed a very high ideal to strive after, for if our young are efficiently developed toward this objective, our nation can hope in the not distant future to be as creative and as cultured as any other in the world. But no one can fail to see that current literature is not only unable to implement this objective but, what is worse, forms our young in habits of thought and emotion, of artistic taste and appreciation which cannot enrich them nor stimulate their gifts toward original creative production of a higher level.

This cursory reflection on our National Objectives in Education, I hope, will convince everyone that we as a people cannot be indifferent to the kind of literature made available to our young. When I say that *all* have the grave obligation of safeguarding the minds and hearts of our young, by *all* I mean not only public officials entrusted with the formal education of our young, but all citizens, particularly fathers and mothers, those who handle libraries, booksellers and publishers.

If we fail to transmit our national ideals of high moral living and to develop the Filipino genius for greater creative activity in arts and letters and the sciences, it is because we have failed to safeguard our young from the destructive influences of one of the most powerful mass media of education—namely immoral Literature.