

THESES & DISSERTATIONS

A STUDY OF PROVINCIAL JOURNALISM IN THE PHILIPPINES

Submitted in partial fulfillment of

The Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

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Bachelor of Literature in Journalism

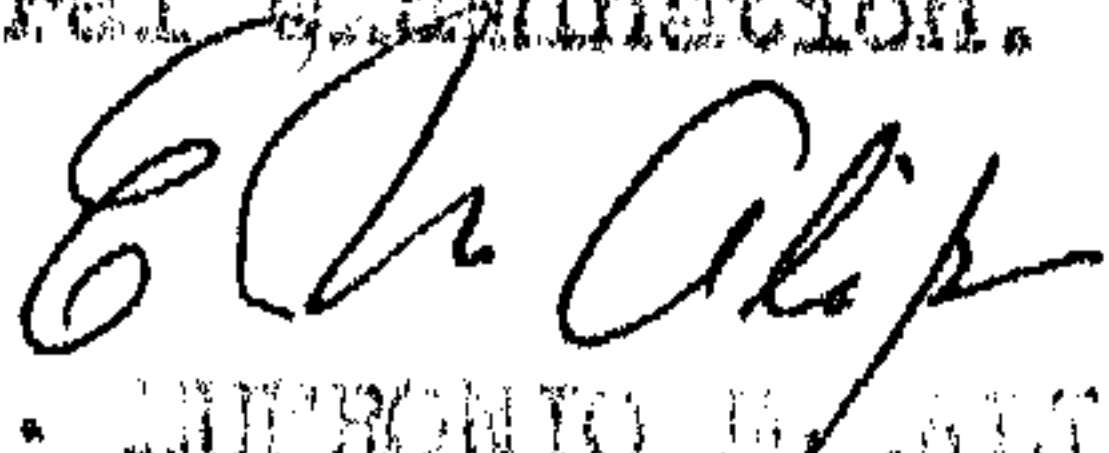
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APPROVAL SHEET

TO THE GRADUATE COUNCIL:

This accompanying thesis entitled;- A STUDY OF PROVINCIAL JOURNALISM IN THE PHILIPPINES, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduate studies leading to the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH, is submitted by Mr. CARMELO S. MENDOZA, who is accordingly recommended for the oral examination.

  
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U. S. T., Manila, March 1950.

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P R E F A C E

The purpose of this exploration into the field of provincial journalism in the Philippines is to impress upon the people the importance of this field in a democracy like ours. No concrete studies have been made on this subject-matter so far, as nobody seems to be interested in developing a subject that seems, from all angles, futile and useless. True, there have been occasional and scattered attempts by local writers before the war to dissect the problems confronting provincial papers with a view to fostering their growth. Possibly because of the interest centered on metropolitan papers, whatever serious attempts there may have been to exploit the field of provincial journalism have ended in failure and no concrete results have crystallized.

Many have argued vehemently that provincial journalism cannot justify its existence at all. To these individuals, the country paper is a survival that has decidedly long since outgrown its utility and they see it as a decaying institution whose days are numbered.

The writer took deep interest in the study of rural journalism before the outbreak of the last war. As part of his graduate study, he had picked out the subject which had been intriguing him most, considering that he was a newspaperman and a member of the



editorial staff of the old Philippines Herald (D-M-H-M Newspapers). He believed then, as he does now, that the country paper is principally indispensable to the growth of democracy.

In the preparation of his materials, however, the writer encountered great difficulties and he came upon a very disconcerting discovery;-- that most of the country editors were not interested in the papers they were putting out. He had written to at least fifty of what he considered representatives of provincial journalism in the Philippines; he received only nine answers. It seemed that many had gone out of circulation before the writer's letters reached them.

So there was then, as there is now, a dearth of material on the subject. The reason possibly is that writers have written on journalism in general, giving meticulous and particular attention to a thorough discussion of city newspapers. At most, a chapter was dedicated to the rural paper.

The writer, therefore, has to make his own study supplemented by the data he has been able to secure. He has also endeavored to treat the subject mostly in the light of his own studies and observations and has attempted to forward certain honest opinions and recommendations calculated, as he believes firmly, to foster the growth of country journalism.

In the process of the latest preparation, the writer has noted that there is a renewed attempt in some provinces to put out news-



papers in various municipalities. It is not impossible that some of these papers are being financed by politicians who see in the provincial paper a chance to further their political ambitions, and to enhance their political prestige.

Before the war, there were one hundred and fifty-three provincial newspapers registered with the bureau of posts, but the bureau received almost weekly, a petition from a provincial paper to cancel its permit because it was going out of circulation due to poor business. As of February, 1950, there were one hundred provincial papers registered with the bureau of posts.

The writer believes that this thesis would somehow prove to be a contribution to the growth of rural journalism in that it may succeed in arousing deep interest in the venture, not so much for its pecuniary benefits as to its vital contribution to the progress of democracy in this country.

CARMELO S. MENDOZA

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Newspapers are excellent reflectors of the life and spirit of the people by whom and for whom they have been edited and published. They give an extraordinarily valuable insight into the social, political and economic conditions of the day and age in which they appear. Through their editorials, they influence the ideas and actions not only of the government but also of the people.

Journalism in the Philippines was, at the beginning, only a small sheet issued irregularly to acquaint the public with government orders. Afterwards, this sheet became a regular publication --either a fortnightly or a weekly-- to disseminate news and later on it developed into a powerful daily of today which does not only depict local and foreign events and conditions but also reflect public opinion, diffuse human thought, and make and unmake reputations and even government.

In the early days of Philippine journalism, the journalists specialized in editorials. There was not much use for reporters partly because what news there might have been to report were suppressed by the censors, and partly because the greater part of the contents of newspapers were reprints and clippings from newspapers from Spain, London and the Americas.



The papers then had little news as the term is generally known today. The reason was that the people demanded religious readings to satisfy their spiritual needs. Sermons were published in full and dogmas handed down as truths and invaluable doctrines gave the people satisfaction.

Censorship, however, had its good effects. When articles were suppressed, the journalist had to look for some other way to fill up the space and so in that way he developed his genius. Because printing of maladministration would mean severe punishment, the newspaperman was forced to dwell on theology, science and the arts to give the reading public a variety of reading matter. He wrote poems, essays, descriptions and other matters that revealed sweetness of character, aspects of truth and spiritual beauty, kindness and self-denial.

The period of retarded development was short, however. This was due to the fact that the native instinct for the expression of long suppressed sentiments was ever alive. Furthermore, the rapid diffusion of ideas since the opening of the 20th century and the improvement and increase in transportation and communication facilities which feature the progress of the Filipinos for the last 50 years, gave new energy, direction, and new problems of life to people who then wanted to express their ideas in the newspapers.

The present nature of Philippine newspapers received much of



its character from American journalism. The eight-column banner, the five-column tabloid form, physical make-up, mechanics of headline writing and the style of news presentation are distinctly American. This may have been the result of the influence of American journalism and the training of Filipino journalists in the United States.

The Philippine press is substantially a free press. As a matter of fact, there was a law passed by the Congress of the Philippines in 1948, specifying that the reporter cannot be forced to reveal the source of his information unless the security of the state is at stake. But in actual practice, the editor is still careful lest a story he has published might create an adverse opinion which might alienate his readers or cause his publisher to lose part of his advertising income. We buy a newspaper regardless of its policies or political color. In this way, Philippine newspapers may be said to be non-partisan. The circulation then depends on the impression that the paper makes on the readers.

There were attempts to hold the press in leash by public officials who had found news about themselves unfavorable to their reputation. In 1927, for instance, the president of the Manila municipal board prepared an ordinance making it a misdemeanor for a newspaperman to publish false reports. Upon recommendation of the city attorney, however, the proposed ordinance was dismissed.



of training in the running of a newspaper, have always taken an unwanted hand in journalism.

Because of the geographical condition of the archipelago, comprising numerous scattered islands which factor gives rise to various dialects, provincial newspapers may be considered a natural growth. The term "provincial" as applied to the newspaper in the Philippines, signifies merely the district or geographical division in which a certain newspaper is published.

The provincial newspaper is perhaps even more powerful in politics than the Manila paper. Provincial governors or officials in lower category who win in the elections may owe their victory to the rural paper published in the communities where they live.

Many provincial newspapers may be considered just political organs. Some are published for the self-edification of the editors, who ultimately become politicians. Only a few stand for the enlightenment of public opinion.

This situation is really deplorable. Provincial papers must be published for public enlightenment purposes. They should play an important role in the socialization process so essential in a democracy.

The urgent need for common understanding and the cultivation of what has been termed social self-consciousness is obvious, for on these fundamental prerequisites, unity is built. There can be



no political democracy, much less economic or social democracy, in a group where psychological unity is lacking. Democracy requires a community of interest and ideas. This, however, does not imply unanimity of belief but a condition in which, while not in complete agreement, all individuals in a group are conscious of the different points of view, beliefs, and ideas of the others, and are tolerating of them.

Democracy, to all advocates of this form of government, is based upon intelligent cooperation and as this cooperation develops, society becomes more adequate. The extension and development of unity and whole-hearted cooperation come about through the process known as socialization. Giddings, in his "theory of socialization", defines it as "the development of a social nature or character --a social state of mind-- in the individuals who associate."

There can be no cooperation and well-organized social life at least in countries boasting of democracy where common participation in social matters is required without common understanding.

An individual, for instance, cannot expect a sound democracy to be composed of ignorant, uninformed or indifferent persons. A thorough knowledge or keen and comprehensive understanding of the affairs of one's circle are no longer, as in times long past, mere luxuries, but actual honest-to-goodness necessities. The



need for it, according to Malcolm MacDonald Willey in his work "The Country Newspaper", grows as civilization develops into intricacy.

This need for knowledge is inexorably felt in all phases of life, but it is especially and specifically important in the life of the individual as a citizen for democracy posits intelligent citizenship.

There are many ways in which to carry forward the socializing process and many agencies that may play a part. One of the most important is the press, both metropolitan and provincial.

It is clear that the widespread reliance upon the press gives to the newspaper tremendous possibilities. According to Willey, "if our knowledge of society, our town, our nation, our world, is drawn, as it seems to be, in no small part of what we read in the newspapers, if our opinions and prejudices are fed by materials gleaned from them, then the newspaper editors and those who dictate editorial policy can quite definitely aid or hinder the creation of an intelligently informed citizenry." The newspapers claim that their function is the publishing of news, and if what they actually print is socially significant, then they can have a large and beneficial influence upon the socializing process.

There is no doubt about this;— that the provincial paper can play a vital role in the socialization process, in making neigh-



bors understand what each is doing in his own community, in making the people conscious of each other's existence. But an obstacle to successful provincial journalism is the utter lack of nearly everything that is necessary to contribute to its success. There are no moneyed people who are willing to invest in the business. Granting that there are, the journalist next faces problems as discouraging as the first, namely:- lack of materials that are worth printing and which are interesting in the eyes of the townspeople, the lack of customers and finally the lack of profit.

In an article published in the Herald Mid-week magazine entitled "It's Not New, Mr. President," dated March 22, 1939, Vicente Albano Pacis, one of the ablest exponents of Philippine journalism, said:

"There has never been a democracy without journalism. Uninformed citizens are not competent to participate in self-government and journalism is so far the only medium by which citizens can be informed en masse, regularly, systematically, accurately and lastingly."

Mr. Pacis stated that journalism must not be confined within city limits but must be made to thrive in the province, for it is only then that the growth of democracy can be assured."

Mr. Pacis said further:- "More newspapers will develop more intelligent thinking among the rural masses. Where there is in-

telligent thinking, the only agitators who have any chance of getting a hearing are those who have at heart the best interest of the country as a whole."

It is indeed safe to state that the fundamental cause of social unrests in certain sections of the country today is the lack of intelligent information to the masses about the activities of the government for their welfare. That crusade for public enlightenment should have started years ago through the media of the provincial newspapers.

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