

# FREEDOM for the Philippines

by **RAYMOND L. BUELL**

## I

**I**T IS NOW clear that the Hoover administration cannot stave off much longer Congressional action on the Philippines question. The demands of the Filipinos have long since passed beyond the stage of academic debate. Confronted by the refusal of American officials to discuss the independence issue, an undercurrent of bitterness has developed during the last year in the Islands, which is illustrated by the fanatical Colored riots of last January and the attack this July upon the Army and Navy club at Manila during the Hawes independence parade.

There are Americans who still insist that these demonstrations are artificially instigated by the *politicos* and that the masses of the people prefer the continuance of American rule. But those who harbor such a belief are deluding themselves. They make the mistake of grossly underestimating the strength of revolutionary sentiment — a mistake committed by most imperial governments from the time of Lord North on. When as genial a friend of the United States as General Aguinaldo comes out for independence, it is evident that the Philippines are as united upon this issue as any people can be.

For this independence sentiment the United States is partly responsible. It is true that we annexed the Philippines at the end of the Spanish war, in violation of previous promises, when we could have recognized the independence of the Malolos government, subject to American protection and advice. Nevertheless, at the very beginning of our occupation, American officials announced that our policy was aimed at fitting the people for self-government, and every president down to Calvin Coolidge led the Filipinos to believe that

eventually they would receive independence in case they desired it. In establishing an elected legislature, in turning over hundreds of administrative posts to the Filipinos, and in diffusing education among the masses, albeit at Philippine expense, we have paved the way for independence. It is too late now to turn back.

As a result of the round table conference in London last winter the British have undertaken to grant a measure of self-government to India far greater than that enjoyed by the Philippines

— and this despite the fact that the Filipinos as a group are probably much more able to govern themselves than the people of India with their many castes. The force of this Indian example is sinking into the Filipino consciousness. If the Hoover administration meets the demand for independence with stony silence, the eventual result can only be an anti-American movement which may take the form of passive resistance

or of open violence. In view of our repeated promises to the Philippines, and our frequent denials that we possess “colonies,” the United States cannot afford to be the most reluctant of the great imperial powers to make concessions to its wards.



## II

**W**ITHIN THIS country the ranks of those who believe in Philippine independence because of principle have been swelled during the last few years by those who support independence because of self-interest. In 1913 the United States adopted a free trade régime with the Philippines under which American manufactures enter the Islands free of duty, while Philippine products similarly enter the United States. As a result of this free trade, Filipino

sugar, copra, and coconut oil have entered into competition with our domestic products to the discomfiture of some of our farmers. Unsuccessful in their efforts to terminate the free trade régime, these interests now support independence, knowing full well that once the Philippines are free, Congress will erect a high tariff barrier against their products, and thus safeguard the American market.

Opponents of independence express indignation that such "sordid" commercial motives should enter into the Philippines question. But surely it is hypocrisy to oppose independence simply because American sugar and coconut oil producers favor it. For years other business interests have strenuously opposed independence because of the "sordid" belief that independence would end their present trade privileges. If the influence of one group of business interests is now offset by another, the Philippines question may at last be decided upon the basis of the needs and interests, not of American business men, but of the Filipino people.

No more serious blow to independence was ever dealt than by establishing free trade between the Philippines and the United States. Under an ordinary tariff régime, in which the Philippines would have charged duties upon all imports, the Islands would have developed their own resources so as to increase the native standard of living; they also would have developed foreign trade with their neighbors, such as Indo-China, the Dutch colonies, China, and Japan. But because of free trade, the foreign commerce of the Philippines has been funneled to the United States, located seven thousand miles away. On the other hand, the high American tariff obstructs the flow of products between the Philippines and Japan.

The free trade régime, applying only to the United States, is thus a policy which flagrantly violates the open door and is therefore irritating to foreign nations. What is more, this situation has made the whole economy of the Islands dependent upon the maintenance of the present political relationship with the United States. It is quite true, as opponents of independence state, that immediate freedom, accompanied by the sudden termination of free trade, would deal a vital blow to the Philippine economic system — but this would not be due to any fault of the Filipino people: it would

be due to a mistaken economic policy of the United States.

There is grave danger that the next Congress, controlled by the Democrats and the Farm Bloc, will overlook this tariff factor and vote a bill for immediate political and economic independence. President Hoover could sign such a bill, thus throwing the Islands into economic anarchy. On the other hand, should he veto it, he would have to assume the responsibility for perpetuating a rule which the Filipinos strenuously oppose. It is doubtful whether a man who has pledged himself to the evacuation of Haiti and Nicaragua would care to assume this responsibility. What then is the alternative? The alternative is for the President to initiate a policy of his own.

### III

SO FAR, the only indication of the Administration's view on the Philippines is contained in the testimony of Secretary Stimson before a Senate committee last winter. Speaking from his brief experience as Governor-General of the Islands, Mr. Stimson expressed opposition to any interference with the existing free trade régime. He argued that free trade should be continued, and that consequently the economic ties between the Islands and the United States be drawn more taut than ever. Its continuance may be a subtle means of attacking the independence movement, but it is a policy which will only increase the bitterness of the Filipinos when they learn, if indeed they do not know it already, that free trade, instead of benefiting the Islands as a whole, has created a monopoly for American business men. The continuance of free trade will not prevent the coming of independence; it will simply increase the trials of the Filipinos, once they become free.

The only sound policy for the White House is honestly to accept the principle of independence, and to take measures whereby this principle may be realized without creating economic disaster. If the President wishes to forestall extremist action both in the American Congress and in the Philippines, he should convene a round table conference of Filipino and American leaders. This conference should work out a plan for political independence, accompanied by a transitional régime in which free trade with the United States would be gradually terminated and trade treaties negotiated and

markets built up between the Philippines and their Oriental neighbors.

Such a conference could also make provision for the employment of foreign advisers by the Philippine government, for the safeguarding of foreign investments, and for the neutralization of the Islands either through membership in the League of Nations or by a Pacific pact. Under no circumstances should the United States seek the right to maintain naval bases in an independent Philippine republic. Other nations would bitterly resent it.

No matter how humanitarian the colonial

government may be, a people under alien rule is necessarily prevented from assuming the responsibility that is essential for the full development of its political and cultural gifts. Freedom for the Philippines no doubt will mean for the time being an increase in corruption and inefficiency; but it will also mean the growth of national responsibility and self-respect and the release of springs of energy which at present are held down by the psychological and cultural repression inevitably arising from alien rule. No people learns to govern itself so long as it is held in leading strings.

## No More "Plans"

by L. M. GRAVES

AS A STUDENT of practical economic matters, I have read with considerable interest recent articles in *THE FORUM* advocating a plan for business in the United States. It may be, as some intimate, that it has now come to be a mark of sophistication to deride the naïve caution of those who question the validity of panaceas. It may be that we have reached the point in this country where a planning board of some sort would appear to be necessary. Nevertheless, it seems to me well to consider what is really involved. Those who talk about the necessity of setting up a plan for American industry fail to recognize, or at least to explain, that this involves the scrapping of a whole social order and the substitution therefore of a different sort of order which may some time and somewhere in the world prove to be more or less successful, but which might not work in this country and might, on the other hand, lead to ruin much more quickly than is predicted of the present system by its most enthusiastic critics.

The immediate impelling cause of the large demand for some kind of a "plan" is undoubtedly the business depression. Depressions there always have been and always will be for one cause or another. The most highly

improved Russian bolshevik plan will not prevent people from going hungry if the crops fail or if the leaders steal everything from the people or if the workers in the factories revolt and destroy the machinery instead of operating it. Nevertheless, there is something more permanent than a financial depression underlying the discussion.

For thirty or forty years, the trend in American industry has been away from individual control toward a socialized order. This has long been recognized as inevitable with the disappearance of the frontier and the growing congestion of population. The degree of individual freedom which was possible and necessary a half century ago is no longer possible. All activities are coming to be organized about some group, some corporate body.

Under our *laissez faire* traditions, it is natural that the collective interest has been somewhat neglected, that individualistic motives have been carried over to a large extent into the new group forms. But it appears that we have now reached a stage of comparative maturity in our industrial development which is destined to bring far-reaching changes.

We have reached the point where the great problem is to conserve and perpetuate our in-