

FROM THE MINISTER

The following brief columns have appeared in the  
monthly publication of Union Church of Manila,  
The Prologue

"CARMONA"

February, 1969

Drive along the newly constructed South Superhighway and you will observe the Army trucks loading the squatter homes and families for relocation to two officially designated areas south of Manila; one near San Pedro and the other near Carmona. Many Manilans are sighing with relief at the prospect of these squatter houses being removed. It will mean fewer children playing along the highway in the dangerous area between the highway and the railroad tracks, and the appearance of a major highway will be improved. But the question now is what will happen to the people, the families, the children who have been moved from the city?

On Monday a group of us went down to Carmona to see for ourselves the re-settlement area. The site is potentially beautiful, high atop several hills overlooking Laguna de Bay. The concept of 140 meter lots for each home with land ownership involved is sound; but everything else is discouraging right now.

(1) There is no electricity and little or no water. Seven wells supply the whole Carmona area, but at San Pedro there is no water at all. The people at San Pedro carry their water by hand the 4 kilometers in to the area.

(2) There is a government doctor at Carmona but we were told that he has no medicine.

(3) There is not one vehicle at the site, so that in effect people are cut off from all outside help each evening when stray cars no longer drive by.

(4) It costs a man ₱1.60 to travel from the site to Manila and back (a 2½ hour trip each way) so that very few men who have jobs can be with their families at the site except for a few days each month. (One hope in this regard is the prospect of men from the settlement gaining employment in industries that are along the South Super highway.)

(5) The result is that many people are becoming discouraged and will understandably drift back little by little to Manila in the hope of finding some new place to put up a shack and try to keep body and soul together.

The result of our trip is the formation of a special Action Committee to work toward the establishment of an Ecumenical Community Service Center at the area with a modest multi-purpose building. We would hope a Pastor could be placed there to minister to the people and help during the week in family planning clinics, cottage industry projects, etc.

The problems are certainly big but not impossible. This will be a place to watch. If these two resettlement areas could really work, if men can find jobs near by, if a sense of community can emerge, if the churches can stand along side these people right now when they need our friendship then a tremendous gain will have been made; hope will have won out over despair and confusion. Let me know if you want to help in this project.