

- The fraudulent methods and hypocrisies of the Filipino politician.

MYTHS IN PHILIPPINE POLITICS

In the Philippines, the voters, aided and abetted by the politicians themselves, have constructed an elaborate mythology about their public officials according to which the latter must conform to a more or less clearly-defined, uniform "image," under pain otherwise of alienating "public opinion" and the favor of the electorate. There is, to begin with the poor boy image, which requires public officials to act and look poor, no matter how great a fortune they may have stashed away in allowances or from other sources, dubious and otherwise. The poor boy image comes prominently into play particularly during the elections season, when politicians who are habitually garbed in imported fabrics in Manila show up in the provinces clad in casual shirts and rolled-up *maong* pants, riding in jeeps and prewar-model cars instead of in the Cadil-

lacs and Electras they had left behind at home.

There is the "pakikisama" image, which compels the politician to be the very soul and embodiment of warm fellowship and of sympathy and concern for his fellowmen, even total strangers. He shouldn't refuse the offer of liquor even if the stuff makes him sick or may literally kill him. He must attend the funeral of utter strangers because their surviving relatives are voters in the community. He is supposed to chip in for births, baptisms, weddings and deaths. In some communities he must act the 100 per cent loyal husband and family man who is never distracted by a trim ankle even if he may have a couple of mistresses hidden away somewhere, while other places want their leaders to live up to the Latin ideal of "machismo," or masculinity. A champion of "machismo" in Phil-

ippine political history was, of course, the fabulous Quezon, who wondered out loud in his autobiography. "The Good Fight," what earthly connection there was between his sense of appreciation for feminine pulchritude and his competence and ability to run the government.

There is again the widespread public expectation that their officials should never show any marked improvement in their standards of living and way of life while they are in office.

The electorate has built up an elaborate mythology about their officials and politicians and fully expects them to live up to it, even if for appearances' sake only. To be sure, there can be no argument with the substance of requiring public officials to refrain from feathering their own nests through betrayal of the public trust, or from enriching themselves in office at the expense of public interest, or from living

ostentatiously, extravagantly and tastelessly. The alternative would be chaos, the complete breakdown of public service and a wild orgy of looting of public funds.

The important thing, however, is that the people should insist on substantial, rather than superficial and, worse, fraudulent compliance with these rules. If they did, the politicians would then abide by them in the same manner, and we would be well on the way towards establishing a strong, honest and incorruptible civil service. The trouble, however, is that so many of the people are satisfied with token even if unquestionably fraudulent compliance, and the politicians know this and act accordingly; hiding their chicanery and peccadillos behind pious fronts. The system has thus placed a premium on hypocrisy, guile and deceit. — *By J. V. Cruz, Manila Times, July 12 1965.*