

- The ousting of 3 Philippine senators from their senate seats, Messrs. Antonino and Manglapuz, and Mrs. Katigbak, provoked the following column in the *Manila Times* and editorial in the *Manila Bulletin*.

THE EVIL OF MONEY IN DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

OVERSPENDING IN ELECTIONS

A decision of the Senate Electoral Tribunal expected to be promulgated soon to oust three incumbent Senators for overspending in the 1961 elections is being hailed and bewailed.

It is being welcomed for whatever deterrent effect it may have on people running for public office. Election campaigns for both national and local elective positions have become so costly that they have become scandalous. The expected verdict is being deplored for its tardiness. Those against whom the action is to be taken are rounding out their six-year term. They have performed all the functions of their high office, have received all the emoluments and other benefits accruing to their position, and

for all intents and purposes have served the term.

The composition of the Senate Electoral Tribunal — three members of the Supreme Court, three ruling party Senators and three opposition party Senators — invests it with an aura of rectitude and practically forbids any critical view of its acts and performance.

Still it may be wished that it could terminate processes early enough for protestants to derive the benefits due them and for people wrongly occupying high office to feel the punishment for their misdeeds, instead of continuing to enjoy the honors and tangibles due their position.

As it is, ouster of the three Senators concerned will award their replacements a quasi-empty victory. This is so because unless they could still sit at any special session that

may be called, they could be considered honorary Senators for the remainder of the sixth year of their term.

Of course, there is no down-grading the impact of the verdict of the Senate Electoral Tribunal. It is unprecedented. Its effect on the public image of those against whom it is directed could have far-reaching consequences upon their political career.

The offense for which they are expected to be ousted is overspending. This involves spending more than the equivalent of one year's salary from the public office sought in election campaigning. In the case of Senators, the one-year salary is ₱7,200.

The Tribunal's verdict, which should be taken as a condemnation of election overspending, is timely in the face of rampant malpractices in this regard which have brought in their train other evils that could make a mockery of our democratic systems.

The members of the Senate Electoral Tribunal are to be congratulated for their moral courage in arriving at the expected verdict. The Supreme Court Justices in

the Tribunal are men of known uprightness. The Senators sitting in judgment of their peers have likewise performed like elders of our nation that they are presumed to be.

The expected verdict should reestablish faith in our democratic systems and discredit cynical attitudes toward their faults. It is a bloodless process of righting a wrong whose value in our way of life must be appreciated. — *Manila Bulletin*, May 8, 1967.

CAMPAIGN SPENDING

The charge of overspending against three senators has been received by most people with a feeling of irony because it comes after the three served their full term and it deals with a fact of political life that is common knowledge and practice. We do not sanction overspending in election campaigns, we consider this the primary root of all our evils at present. Neither do we censure the action of the tribunal, since any action is better than no action. This is obviously a precedent. It is applying a law that could easily encom-

pass all public officials serving at present. The fact that it took six years to reach such a verdict on such simple evidence and legal application robs the ruling of any reason for crowing. It is quite a coincidence that in one celebrated case, a ruling unseating a congressman who had lost an election protest, came after the four-year term had run its course. It takes six years to arrive at a much simpler matter when entertaining cases against senators.

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In the latest issue of one weekly magazine, a governor is quoted directly as saying: "I used up more than ₱2 million to win the governorship and to help Piping in his reelection bid. But Danding spent more than ₱4 million in his abortive attempt to unseat Peping and to help President Marcos win." Obviously, a simple look at expense in mass media alone would be sufficient evidence of a lot of election spending, and everybody knows that expenses in campaigns are less in the form of promotional materials such as sample ballots and more in outright buying of support of some leaders. If one is

to believe loose coffee-shop talk, one senator reportedly asked a presidential candidate for ₱100,000 just to appear in Plaza Miranda to give an endorsement speech.

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The cost of politics is really staggering. Those who overspend should be unseated and condemned. But we think that the electoral tribunal is also responsible for being so unexcusably slow. Furthermore, there is need for more sensible safeguards to prevent election overspending. We suggest that the government print only one official sample ballot with all the names of the candidates, and ban all other such sample ballots. We also think that radio time and print advertising should be made on a limited scale, because what ultimately results is a lot of block-time buying in order to speculate on air time during the elections. Billboards should also be confined to one area with equal space. In short there are many areas where actual spending could be curbed by limiting and standardizing their use for election purposes. — *By A. R. Roces in Manila Times, May 9, 1967.*