

NEWS FRONT

THE EXODUS BEGINS

The traffic of people from one party to another in Philippine politics is a phenomenon as pervasive as money in our politics. And during the election season, this tribe increases by leaps and bounds. To the likely winner, go the unbelievers in their party's ultimate victory.

The other week, a crowd of 3,000 gathered at the Manila Hotel Fiesta Pavilion to witness a mass affiliation of Liberals to the Nacionalista Party. The 390 new Nacionalistas were headed by Former Speaker Cornelio Villareal, once-upon-a-time President of the Liberal Party and once-upon-a-time aspirant to its presidential nomination.

Speaking during the affair, President Marcos said that Speaker Villareal and Senator Padilla represent "the new realignment of forces in Philippine politics wherein all decent elements are finally committed to the



good of the Filipino common man." It is now clear, he added, that while in the past, there were no fundamental differences between the two parties, today, there is a marked and clear distinction.

Villareal, for his part, described what he called the Liberal Party's "metamorphosis of degeneration, from a party without social conscience to a party that has been stripped of its sense of historical mission, a party divested of its democratic character."



A NEW LEASE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

President Marcos signed into law major legislation recently passed by Congress, four of which are aimed at benefiting poor litigants.

The new laws, principally authored by Senator Laurel in the Senate are:

1. Senate Bill No. 746, which provides transportation and other allowances for indigent litigants;

2. Senate Bill No. 745, which requires courts to give preference to criminal cases where the party or parties involved are indigents;

3. Senate Bill No. 748, which requires stenographers to take transcripts of notes for indigent and low income litigants for free, and provides a penalty for the violation thereof; and

4. Senate Bill No. 780, which provides that bail shall not, with certain exceptions, be required in cases of municipal or city ordinance violations and in criminal offenses when the prescribed penalty for such offenses is not higher than *arresto mayor* and or a fine of ₱2,000 or both.

These approved bills were certified to Congress by the President as urgent and passed during the last special session.

HANDS OFF, STRANGERS

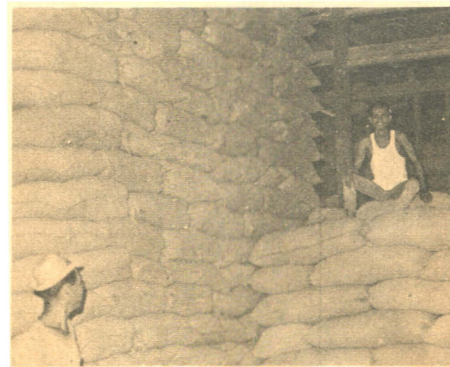
It was a resolution unprecedented in the entire history of the Commission on Elections. In a sternly-worded statement, the poll body composed of Comelec Chairman Jaime N. Ferrer and Commissioners Cesar Miraflor and Lino M. Patajo warned all foreigners in the country to keep off the current political campaign or face criminal prosecution. They further stressed, that not only foreigners but also the candidates or persons who make such intervention possible are guilty of a serious criminal offense.

This practice, Ferrer said, is an act of subversion of the country's democratic process in the selection of national leaders.

To facilitate circulation of the resolution, the Comelec Chairman request-

ed Foreign Secretary Carlos P. Romulo, Commerce Secretary Marcelo Balatbat and Immigration Commissioner Edmundo Reyes to circulate the resolution among foreigners.

Despite the rightness of the Comelec move, however, Ferrer admitted that there would be difficulty in cracking foreigners interfering with elections. But, he says, "We must start now. In time, we will pin down these aliens."



LP RICE SCARE: A HOAX

It may have all begun on the political platform. LP Presidential candidate Sergio Osmeña, Jr., desperate to find a kink in the armor of the Administration's litany of achievements, charged that there was a rice crisis in the nation. Contrary to the claims of the President, Osmeña claimed that the impending rice shortage he had feared was slowly surfacing.

The effect of this blast, repeated over and over again by Osmeña and the Opposition, was to create all over the country a climate of anxiety among the people.

Through the charge drew an immediate denial from the Rice and Corn Administration (RCA) and the Rice Millers Association, which both claimed ample supply of the cereal until the next harvest, many feared that the Osmeña blast might just encourage some rice retailers to hoard the cereal and thus create an artificial rice crisis.

A thorough check of the claims of Osmeña and RCA chairman Alfredo Montelibano showed that the latter was right. The storerooms of the rice agencies in Central Luzon clearly indicated that no such crisis was impending.

To arrest the ill effects of the LP sabotage attempt of the Administration's rice program, the RCA and the rice millers association immediately launched a "rolling store" sale of the cereal in Greater Manila. The price was pegged at ₱1.40 per ganta. Surprisingly enough, no lines formed and this more than anything else belied the rice scare of the Opposition.