

GREATNESS BEGINS WITH OUR LEADERS*

As the year draws to a close and a new — and crucial — one looms ahead, the time has come for us to speak out what we feel and think about our government. We have had six changes of political leadership since 1946, but what have we to show after 22 years of independence?

Graft and corruption has not abated. The cancer has spread to almost every level of government. We have reached a point where it is easier to do wrong than to do right. The current impression is that one runs for public office in the Philippines — not for service to the people but for profit and patronage.

Crime has increased at an alarming rate in all its vicious forms. Violence in our cities is matched by violence in the countryside. The rule of the gun is replacing the rule of law.

People begin to wonder whether the government has the ability and sincerity to control crime. This is because wrongdoers and criminals are not caught, much less convicted. A man is shot, and his killer generally goes free. A court case can drag on for years without end. While the influential and powerful get swift justice, the poor find justice beyond their means.

Meanwhile our poor become poorer and the rich richer. There are not enough jobs to go around. Our unemployed number in the hundreds of thousands. And those who are able to work soon find that the value of their peso has been diluted by rising prices.

All about us we see proofs of our misery. Children out of school and begging in the streets. Squatter shanties proliferating in our cities.

Social unrest rearing its ugly head in the provinces.

And what of the basic public services that a government is supposed to offer its citizens?

Road repair and maintenance have been studiously neglected. It is no small wonder that our traffic is often snarled and at a standstill. Mail takes weeks to reach us and our checks are often pilfered or lost.

Even water is now a rare commodity; one has to drill for it in order to drink. Garbage collection is a luxury that comes once a week, if at all, and during Christmas. We can go on and on and the list will be endless.

It is time we declared what we want and expect from our leaders.

We believe we deserve a government that is free of graft and corruption.

We believe we deserve a government that can control crime and bring order out of chaos.

We believe we deserve a government that can offer us a fair chance to earn a living, own a home and enjoy life without the fear that

tomorrow rising prices may stop us from buying a decent meal to feed our families.

We believe we deserve a government that can take care of basic public services such as health and sanitation, education, traffic order, efficient postal system, and adequate water supply.

We believe we deserve a government that can guarantee a regime of justice where every man, rich or poor, will have his day in court.

It is not yet too late for our leaders to act. But the change has to begin with our leaders.

Our hopes for changing the nation can only begin with a change within our own leaders, for those who rule and those who aspire. They must see the need for change. It is fast becoming a question of our leaders changing their attitudes or means. Change must come one way or another.

There is a clamor and pressure from the masses for a change in the values of those who govern. The leadership that goes about pro-

misgiving instead of solving the basic national problems at their roots does not recognize this clamor. It has lost touch with what the people want and expect from their government.

In any political creed, any leadership that has no communication with and is isolated from the people, can hold on to power only by gimmickry. But gimmickry does not solve a crisis of confidence. It masks the crisis until it reaches the dangerous point of explosion.

We need the sincerity of dedicated men who will put the interest of the people above the interest of self, any special group or political party. We need the

patriotism of heroes, like Bonifacio, Mabini, or Rizal, who know the meaning of sacrifice. We need the discipline of true leaders who will owe loyalty to no other purpose except the welfare of our people.

The task before us is nation-building. Its foundation is not stone or marble but the character and greatness of a people moulded by the character and greatness of its leaders.

Greatness for this nation has been promised. That promise has not been kept. We call on our leaders to be great, for only then can this nation be great again. — *Editorial, The Manila Times December 11, 1968.*

FOR INCREASED WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

We are in the middle of a race between human skill as a means and human folly as an end, resulting in strife, insecurity and sorrow. Unless men increase in wisdom, as much as in knowledge, the increase in knowledge will only be increase of sorrow. — *Bertrand Russell*