

A Safety Valve



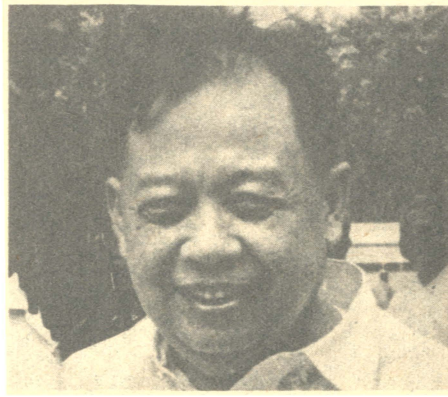
PRESIDENT MARCOS
A second term?

THERE is so much talk about a possible revolution in the Philippines that a number of people are indeed scared about the future. We know several Filipinos who have migrated to Canada or the United States in search of a more stable climate for their talents. "We don't want to be around when the revolution comes," says a doctor and his pretty wife who had just graduated from nursing school.

In the last several years, the subject of a revolution has been so loosely talked about as though it really were around the corner. And yet in the face of seemingly hopeless conditions, Filipinos are not about to launch a proletarian revolution. They did once, in protest to the despotic rule of Spain. But things are not that hopeless today and there is no foreign power to seek independence from.

Acting as a safety valve to our pent-up emotions are a number of factors, not the least of which is the very democratic framework of our government. The Philippine Constitution, drafted by great minds such as the late Don Claro Recto has amply provided avenues by which dissatisfied citizens may seek change without resort to violence. Citizens have fallen back on the Constitution a number of times in our history.

Unimpressed by the performance of Presidents Quirino, Garcia and Macapagal, the people repudiated them when they sought a second term. Today President Marcos is hoping for a favorable judgment from the people. Will he become the first Chief Executive to win reelection, or will he go the way of past presidents? The voters, exercising the supreme power of the ballot,



CLARO M. RECTO
Where did they fail?

will have the final say, thanks to the Philippine Constitution.

And yet, it seems time to change the very same Constitution that allows the people the civil liberties and the privileges that they enjoy today under a democratic system. Like everything else, the Constitution suffers from defects that must be corrected.

It is no reflection on the framers of our Constitution that the people today are clamoring for constitutional amendments, and which they will get in 1971 when a Constitutional Convention is held to draft these changes. The Fathers of the Constitution all distinguished citizens of their time — never meant the Document, born on a particular period of our history, to be imposed on the citizens for all time. Hence, the provision for altering it, or even suspending it in times of great national emergency.

The writers of our Constitution, visionaries as they were, could not have foreseen all the problems an emerging nation would face in a rapidly shrinking world. These same framers today would be among the staunchest advocates of Constitutional change — to amend the charter where it has not worked as well as they had hoped.

Senator Arturo M. Tolentino, an acknowledged authority on the workings of government, says rightly that the Philippine Constitution was drawn at a time when the Filipinos were still tied to colonial moorings. Now that the Philippines has attained political and economic independence it becomes only fitting to draw a completely new document that would express in more decisive terms the sovereign aspirations of an independent people.

Are we to retain the presidential system or adopt the parliamentary system? Are we to discard colonial economic alliances and seek new economic partners? Do we want a President elected for four years with reelection, or six years without reelection? These and other momentous questions will be resolved in 1971 by delegates to the Constitutional Convention.



REP. ANTONIO CUENCO
His remedy: change it.

Whatever system we will finally adopt, it seems clear at this time that it should be a system that will generate less politics and more government for the people without impairing existing individual liberties.

It is well that the people have decided, through a plebiscite held in conjunction with the 1967 elections, to separate political candidates from candidates for the Constitutional Convention. They have voted a resounding No to a question whether they would like incumbent officials to run for the Convention. All those planning to run for the Convention must first give up their office.

To allow politicians to dominate the Convention would be to provide a bad beginning to basically good ends.

"It is not entirely accurate to say the situation is hopeless that it needs a man on a horseback to remedy it," says LP Congressman Antonio Cuenco who had initiated the calling of a Constitutional Convention. "We have our Constitution and if we don't like this Constitution, well, we can always change it."

Come 1971, distinguished Filipinos, elected by hopeful masses, will convene to change this Constitution. **FM**