

■ The Chief Justice of our Supreme Court now echoes the popular criticisms against reelections.

THE EVILS OF ELECTIONS AND REELECTIONS

It seems conceded that the practice of lavish electoral spending of rival candidates or political parties is inimical to democracy. The shortening of the period of time open for election campaigns, as provided in a recent legislation, is a step in the right direction; but, it is far from sufficient. More effective measures should be taken to curb election expenses. Such measures would not only insulate the voters from the corrupting influence of money. They would, also, assure that all candidates, regardless of their financial condition, shall have an equal opportunity to be elected on the basis of their personal qualifications and capacity for public service. Thus, ours would truly be a government of the people — and, hence, by and for the people — as it should be, if we are to have a strong democracy. It has become all

too common to regard lavish electoral spending as something we cannot do anything about. This defeatist attitude is manifestly ominous. If it persists, our republican system will be doomed to dismal failure.

As for the Commission of Elections, recent developments would seem to indicate the need for a constitutional amendment ensuring bipartisan representation in the composition of that body. What I mean is that one of its members should always be a nominee of the minority party. The present Constitution does not guarantee minority representation in the Commission. Indeed, not long ago, that body was composed entirely of nominees of the majority party. The result was that, in many instances, the intention and motives of the Commission were regarded by the other party with suspicion, even in

connection with measures adopted by said body which, otherwise, could have been taken on their face value. Such suspicion is not conducive to peaceful and orderly elections. Moreover, it tends to hamper the work of the Commission.

In connection with "re-elections," there is no denying the fact that we are having an overdose of politics everywhere, not only in most activities of the government, but, also, in the field of business, commerce, and industry, and even in civic or charitable institutions and student organizations.

One of the most practical means to minimize the corroding effects of too much politics is, admittedly, to prohibit or limit re-elections. I venture to make this statement because there has been and there seems to be a consensus on the advisability of amending the Constitution to prohibit immediate re-election of the President. This proposal is mainly based upon the belief that a public officer who seeks second term is under a ter-

rific handicap in the performance of his functions. Indeed, a re-electionist is likely to be under the suspicion that he has used the powers and influence of his office for the advancement of his candidacy, instead of, primarily, for the promotion of the commonwealth. Moreover, the danger of alienating much needed votes may be an obstacle to the proper and impartial performance of his duties.

Although the prohibition of immediate re-election may have certain disadvantages, I believe that the same are far outweighed by the benefits resulting from said prohibition. There is, to be sure, a consensus, if not unanimity, on the evils of immediate re-election. What defies logic, from a purely academic viewpoint, is that the ban on re-election is sought to be applied to the Office of the President only. Why not extend it to all elective offices? — *Portions of the Speech of Chief Justice Roberto Concepcion on September 16, 1968.*