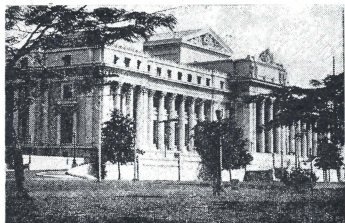


## THE FIRST PHILIPPINE ASSEMBLY

By CESARIO R. LOBRERA \*



*Where the National Assembly Now Meets  
in Manila*

A MEMORABLE DATE in the history of the Philippines is October 16, 1907. On the sixteenth of this month, all the schools celebrated the thirty-third anniversary of the inauguration of the first Philippine Assembly.

What events led to the establishment of the Philippine Assembly? During the pre-Spanish time, the Philippines was composed of many *barangays*. Each of these *barangays* was under the rule of a headman or *dato*. Each chief made laws for the people of his *barangay*. Sometimes a group of old men in the village helped the *dato* in making the laws. But the laws in one *barangay* were obeyed only by the inhabitants there. The people did not follow the laws made by the *dato* of another *barangay*.

During the Spanish regime, the laws that the Filipinos observed were made in the *Cortes*, the Spanish law-making body. The Filipinos fought hard in order to be represented in that body—so that they could take part in passing laws

that would affect the Philippines. The Filipinos, however, were represented only in the years 1810-1813, 1820-1823, and 1834-1837. We were allowed to send representatives to the Spanish *Cortes*, but because of the long distance of our Islands from Europe, our deputies were oftentimes unable to attend the sessions. Spaniards had to be substituted for Filipino delegates. One Filipino representative who did much in the *Cortes* was Ventura de los Reyes, a Manila merchant. He worked hard for the abolition of the galleon trade.

When the Americans came to our shores, the laws and orders were issued by the military governor. When peace was well established, the military government gave way to the civil government. The first body during the American administration to enjoy legislative powers was the Second Philippine Commission which was at first composed of Americans and later, of both Filipinos and Americans. They were all appointed. From 1901 to 1907, the Philippine Commission was the only law-making body in the Islands. Then the Congress of the United States passed an act on July 1, 1902 which was known as the Philippine Bill. The act provided for the establishment of the Philippine Assembly two years after the publication of the census.

The election of the members of the Assembly was held on July 30, 1907. About 100,000 people voted. There were 80 assemblymen elected from the 80 districts in the Philippines. The Philippine Assembly served as the lower house. The Philippine Commission functioned as

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## CLEVER GOBLIN

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as fast as he can.

SECOND GOBLIN: He's trying to throw it into the river.

THIRD GOBLIN: She's overtaking him. Oh, we'll suffer for this!

FOURTH GOBLIN: No, she tripped and fell. Hurrah! He's thrown the hat into the river!

FIRST GOBLIN: Let's go and meet him. *(They run from the stage.)*

CAT: Meow! Meow! Now I'll never have to scratch anybody again. I'm so glad. I want to be a good black cat.

BAD WITCH *(entering)*: Oh, dear! My hat is gone. Now I'll have to be a good witch after all.

CAT: Meow! Meow!

BAD WITCH: Someone is coming. *(Child enters crying.)* What's the matter?

CHILD: This is Halloween, and I haven't any lantern to carry, or costume to wear.

BAD WITCH: Let me see! Here's an extra lantern, and here's a witch's dress to wear.

CHILD: Oh, thank you. *(Goes out with the lantern and the costume.)*

BAD WITCH: Well, well, that was nice. Maybe it will be fun being a good witch, after all.

CAT: Meow! Meow!

## FIRST ASSEMBLY

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the upper house. Together, they formed the Philippine Legislature.

Let us now tell the story of the inauguration of the first Philippine Assembly. This significant event took place at the Manila Grand Opera House on Wednesday, October 16, 1907 at nine o'clock in the morning. The first persons to take their seats in the Grand Opera House were the provincial governors; they were followed by the assemblymen. Many high officials were also present including Secretary of War Taft, a former governor-

BAD WITCH: Now I must empty this kettle of broth, and make some delicious coconut candy. Let me see! Who will help me eat it?

WITCHES *(running in)*: We will!

GOBLINS *(running in)*: We will!

CHILDREN *(entering timidly)*: Did we hear someone say something about candy?

BAD WITCH *(who is no longer a bad witch, but is now a Good Witch)*: Yes, and you all shall have a share.

ALL: Hurrah for Halloween!

—From *The Instructor*.

general, Governor-General Smith, and the members of the Philippine Commission. Governor-General Smith started the ceremonies by reviewing the events which led to the organization of the Assembly. Secretary Taft delivered the inaugural address. The ceremonies ended at noon.

At five o'clock the assemblymen held their first meeting in the Marble Hall of the Ayuntamiento in the Walled City. After the roll had been called, the members proceeded to the election of the speaker. Manuel L. Quezon nominated Sergio Osmeña of Cebu whose election was declared unanimous.

The first Philippine Assembly will go down in Philippine history as the first Filipino legislative body under the American flag. Its creation marked a forward step in the march of the Filipinos towards self-government, a wise policy laid down by President McKinley of the United States. This popular body of brilliant men served as a strong foundation of our present Commonwealth government. Let us then remember the day when the Filipinos started to make laws for themselves—October 16, 1907.