

## THE TRAGEDY OF OUR TIMES

Congress, and for that matter, The Establishment, is on trial in the Sanidad-Cauton row over the congressional seat for the 2nd district of Ilocos Sur. Are we to decide this case on the *palakasan* principle or under the rule of law? The people are watching. They're not happy with what they see.

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The one serious "crisis" that nobody is talking about is the money situation. We're in a "frozen" state, as it were. The banks can't lend and the borrowers dare not pay their loans. Everything is frozen as of Oct. 12. The CB is probably happy with its unprecedented "power" over the banking institutions. The masses who, in the ultimate analysis, must suffer the shock of this paralyzation of the business world, don't know what's going on. They only know what's hitting them. Was it ever this bad?

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When the Muñoz Agricultural School became the Central Luzon State University, the only beneficiaries were the officials of the school. It meant increasing the salaries of the top officials, starting with the president, who started to draw ₱30,000 a year; a vice-president with ₱14,400, and deans with ₱10,000 each. The staff members remained at their old rates of ₱212 a month minimum. The students have yet to see the change for the better. There is a strong agitation for a return to college status. This is a case of wearing long pants before the child is ready.

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I got a letter from a better-than-average educated family of 14 whose trials and tribulations best mirror the tragedy of our times. The father comes from Piddig, Ilocos Norte. He has backpay certificates for the family. But when that represent the

only hope will he be paid? Meantime, his five boys and eight girls are all unemployed. They had supported candidates in past elections in hopes of getting a break. All they got were ID cards and promises. This is not an isolated case. This is typical.

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The administration will do much better by just underscoring what is being done to improve living conditions in Central Luzon instead of creating false hopes for a quick solution to the "crisis." We might as well face the facts: the problem won't be solved this year or next year, nor even in the next five years. It should be sufficient to emphasize what has been done and what are contemplated to be done in the immediate future.

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In the area of peace and order, politics is still the No. 1 stumbling block. For as long as regional and district leaders are minded in every step that the administration takes, even in the simple matter of assignment of key PC, education and judicial officials, we will never have public confidence in the administration. We are follow-

ing a system that has been proved ineffective and wrong during the last 60 years. When justice depends on the whims of the "leaders" of a region, then there is no justice.

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Between pleasing the "leaders" and displeasing the people or pleasing the people and hurting the political gods, the administration prefers the former. Why, then, are we surprised to see the people are losing faith in the rule of law? Palliatives don't work. The people are not as stupid as the politicians think they are. They're only poor and powerless but not stupid. They are resentful if quiet out of sheer hopelessness.

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There is also the need to reconcile words and actions. We keep saying that we will improve the judiciary, assign more law-enforcers, give aid in varying forms but one thing we never disturb — the overlordship exercised by political bosses. How can we promote progress while hugging the status quo ante bellum? The era of datus and sultans is what we have even in the Christian world.

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Thus, Mindanao is the world of certain politicians who cannot be displeased; the Ilocos belongs to another group, and some Visayan provinces are special spheres of influence of some politicians who stand head and shoulders above the law. These are the realities we don't talk about because we do not intend to do anything about them. The President is kidding himself if he thought he can keep his little sultans and kings and at the same time make the Constitution and democracy work. For many of our people, democracy is a world in the dictionary, not a living institution.

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The people are helpless while policemen protect one another, PC protect PC, Army people stand together. The parties are mutual aid and mutual protection associations. The government servants stand aloof from the people. The "will of the people" who are "sovereign" does not ring true in the world of reality '68. Roads, bridges, ample rice and fish nor even parks and playgrounds will not cover up the ugly monuments of dictatorship and anarchy. — *By Teodoro F. Valencia, The Manila Times, November 20, 1968.*

## EAVESDROPPER

In early England when thatched roofs were built a space was left on the ground where the water from the eaves might run down and drip off. This space was called the "eavesdrip" and still later was modified to "eavesdrop." It seems that even in those days there were persons who were not above standing in that space at night, at doors and windows, to listen to what the occupants were saying and doing inside their homes. Such people were dubbed *eavesdroppers* — a name which has remained with them to this day.