

- A stern and objective warning to the three branches of the Philippine Government by a Senator of the Philippines.

WHAT AILS OUR GOVERNMENT

Severe as it may seem to some people, Senator Salvador H. Laurel's indictment of what ails our government (delivered on the floor of the Philippine Senate) is being considered by knowledgeable quarters as but a reflection of the contemporary scene and an exposition of the why's and the wherefore's of the people's disenchantment with our government.

Senator Laurel, in his maiden speech on the Senate floor Monday, made these points:

1. Excessive congressional allowances grown to monstrous figures.

2. Self-centeredness, rather than concern for the public weal; more politics than work; more self-interest than national interest.

3. Chronic and gross violation of the over-spending law, "implying that only the rich can now run and win in the elections."

4. Shameless abuse of the franking privileges by members of Congress.

5. So many rich men in public office "that now, they (the people) are not sure whether one has to be a millionaire to run for Congress or whether one has to run for Congress to be a millionaire."

6. Leakage and anomalies in tax collection.

7. Civil service rules intended to protect the competent, and the conscientious being used to protect the incompetent, inept and corrupt.

8. Poor law enforcement that is not the kind that engenders the people's confidence, as evidenced by the report of the Police Commission and the Philippine Constabulary that some 70 per cent of policemen "are either crooks, criminals or unfit for the important duty of enforcing the law and protecting the people."

9. Scandalous delay of justice such that the constitutional guarantees of due process, equal protection, presumption of innocence, bail, speedy trial and free access to the courts are meaningless myths to the poor who constitute 90 per cent of our population.

10. Incompetence and corruption in many inferior and trial courts; "some judges can be bought and fiscals can be fixed."

Each of these ten points is an indictment in itself that should demand prompt corrective measures. All together they stand a gauge of the extent of erosion of the moral fiber that is a disgrace to our nation.

It is perhaps a peculiarity of our times that Senator Laurel, in his quest for our moral regeneration, should think of a code of ethics for public officials and, in the same breath, voice his realization that such would be a mere scrap of paper for lack of response from those it should serve as guidelines.

There are many people who have been set to thinking on Senator Laurel's points and to wondering if his ominous warning that unless public officials amend themselves we would reap the gathering whirlwind of the people's wrath. — *Editorial, Manila Bulletin, March 6, 1968.*

STATESMAN

A constitutional statesman is in general a man of common opinions and uncommon abilities. — *Walter Bagehot*