

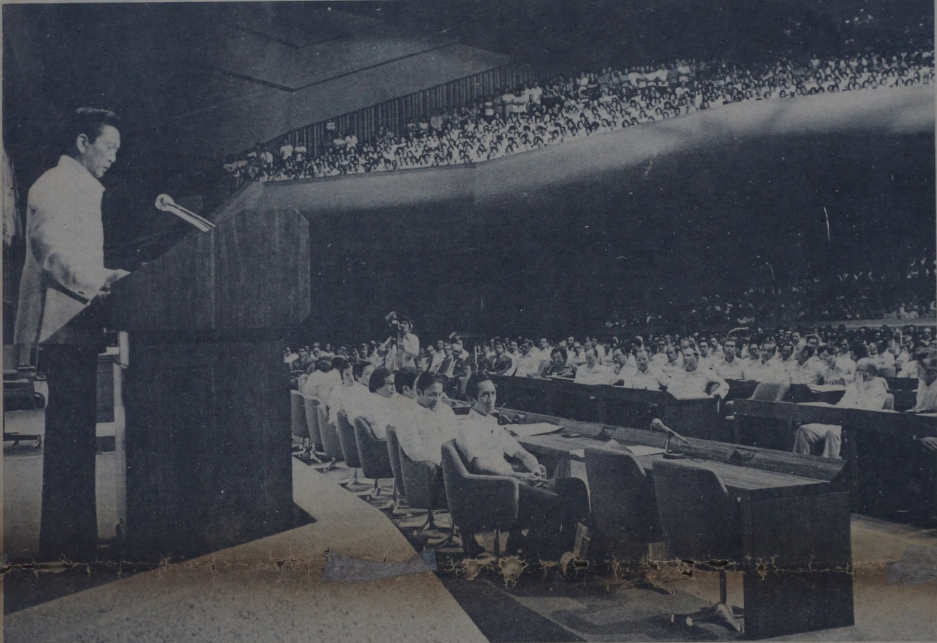
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President Marcos addresses the second session of Batasang Bayan.

## The prospects for the new year

**N**INETEEN seventy-seven is here. The rejoicing for the new year, however, is tempered by the recent announcement of the OPEC that the prices of crude oil will soon be increased. Once more, the resoluteness and the resiliency of the Filipino people will be put to the test. In spite of the probable adverse effects of higher cost of energy, our economic planners are confident that our economy will again weather the inflationary storm. This guarded optimism is based on the nation's performance in the difficult years of 1974 and 1975.

The national government is not letting the course of events shape the national destiny, however. The last few weeks of 1976 have found the government policy-makers hard at work on preparing the development agenda for the coming year.

Significantly, the Batasang Bayan is closely involved in laying the groundwork for 1977. Of course, starting on that year, the government will start following the calendar year in its budget schedule. The budget hearings have been conducted by the Batasang Bayan Appropriations Committee headed by President Ferdinand E. Marcos. The Batasang Bayan, in Resolution No. 6, has already pegged the 1977 national budget at P27.4 billion—an amount that is enough to stimulate the economy, and yet not so excessive as to exacerbate the price pressures sure to be induced by the higher cost of oil.

For several sessions before Christmas, therefore, the Committee "grilled" the various heads of government departments to ensure that all planned expenditures in 1977 are reasonable, hewing close to national priorities and goals. This process, gauging by

its success, is certain to be institutionalized. Not only does the department head is made to justify his budget share, but he is also made to show how his department performed during the past year.

During the budget hearings, President Marcos underscored the need for an integrated program for rural development that links all agencies involved in countryside development. The President's announcement not only signified the continuing emphasis on rural development in 1977, but also his concern for the costly overlapping of functions and lack of coordination among some government agencies.

The Batasang Bayan also approved a medium-term economic development plan for the country starting in 1977 and ending in 1982. The plan stresses once more the target of the government to achieve economic growth that will result in equitable benefits to the people. This method of chartering the course of the economy is of certainly much more effective and logical than the old society system of "spending for the next election year."

The government is also hard at work in its energy conservation program, spearheaded by the EMERCON. Strategies are also being formulated for the marketing of our primary exports. In the case of sugar, which has suffered recent downswings in international prices, the government has dovetailed its potential as a source of alcohol fuel with the energy self-reliance program. All in all, the pressures of higher import cost are certain to induce the government to take a more active hand in promoting our export goods abroad.

Politically, 1977 could become a milestone in

the Philippine political history. Elections for representatives in the national legislature will most probably be held next year. With the institutionalization of the Sangguniang Bayan and the barangay in the Constitution, as mandated by the people in the October Referendum-Plébiscite, community participation in the political processes will surely become more intensive and effective.

Abroad, the Philippines during the recent years have achieved a position of respect for its policy of independence and peace. The recent spate of state visitors to Manila is one indication the growing importance of the Philippines in world affairs. The government in 1977 is certain to continue its policy of dovetailing its diplomatic activities with the imperatives of development at home, particularly in face of a more difficult year for the global economy. A continuing special concern of the government will be the consolidation of the gains made during the Bali Summit among the ASEAN members. Nineteen seventy-seven might yet see the final peaceful solution of the Mindanao problem with the planned visit of Libyan head Col. Muammar Khaddafi in April.

**T**HE government manager is sure to find their hands full of work again in 1977—the fifth year of the New Society. In performing the duties of our office, we can perhaps again take heed of the President's words: "...those who serve me must accept the most ruthless discipline. They must work hard and observe the highest standard of service, otherwise they have no place in the leadership of the New Society..."



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