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*Address delivered at the Masonic District Convention,  
8th District, Olongapo City, Nov. 4, 1967.*

We count it a privilege to be with you today and share with you the joys of your splendid fellowship. To our D.D.G.M., V.W. Desiderio Hebron, the other officers and delegates to this convention, we extend our sincere congratulations for the success of this 10th Annual Session of Masonic District No. 8. Likewise, we would like to convey our fraternal greetings of MABUHAY and hearty congratulations to the members of Lincoln Lodge No. 34 F. & A.M. for having reached another milestone in its life — the golden jubilee of its constitution.

We would like to congratulate the Brother or Brethren who wrote the "MASON'S CREED FOR FREEDOM" printed at the back of the program. No theme could have been more appropriate and more timely as this Creed, more particularly the first and the last paragraphs thereof which call us all to action to defend our constitution and oppose every form of tyranny in order to preserve our civil liberties.

Today is the 4th day of November. Ten days more and we shall troop to the polls, to elect our public officials and test whether the "MASON'S CREED FOR FREEDOM" shall be upheld or not; whether the Filipino people shall maintain, support and defend the Constitution of the Philippines and fight all forms of tyranny over the lives of men "that the freedom of the people, by the people and for the people" might be preserved or not.

On November 14th we shall not only write the names of those we desire to elect but also indicate whether we agree to the two proposals submitted to us by Congress, to wit:

- (1) To raise the maximum, to wit: of the House of Representatives from the present 120 to 180; and
  - (2) To mollify the existing provisions of the Constitution which prohibit the senators and representatives from holding any other office in the government by permitting them to run for delegates to the Constitutional Convention and hold office as such in addition to being representative and/or senators.
- Section 5, Article VI of our Constitution provides:  
Section 5.—The house of representative shall be composed of not more than one hundred and twenty members who shall be apportioned among the several provinces as nearly as may be according to the number of their respective inhabitants, but each province shall have at least one member. *The Congress shall by law make an apportionment within three years after the return of every enumeration and not otherwise.*"

The first question now becomes pertinent: Has the Congress of the Philippines conducted any apportionment since the last enumeration or the last census in 1960? The answer is in the negative.

Since Congress has utterly failed to comply with this imperative duty enjoined by our constitution, it is obvious that it lacks the authority to submit these two proposals to the

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people for their ratification. As the proposals have been passed not in accordance with mandatory provisions of the Constitution, it stands to reason that the same may not be legally submitted to the people for ratification. There is nothing to ratify, because an unconstitutional or illegal act transmits no right whatsoever. The Commission on Election has no authority to include said two proposals to amend to our Constitution in the ballot for the election of officials on November 14, 1967.

We now come to the second question: What are the existing provisions of our Constitution which prohibit our senators and representatives from holding other positions in our government? The answer is Section 16 of Article VI of our Constitution.

This particular Section was once raised and put to actual test in the recent past. With your permission, I shall attempt to state it briefly.

You will recall that immediately after the liberation of the Philippines, our legislators voted 3 millions pesos for themselves, allegedly to pay the senators and representatives 3-1/2 years backpay. When the people got wind of this anomalous transaction, they raised a relentless protest.

On September 29, 1945, the Democratic Alliance, a conglomeration of various guerrilla organizations held at Plaza Guipit, Sampaloc Manila, a huge demonstration, composed of around ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND (100,000) strong, mostly students, guerillas, and government employees. They denounced to high heavens the illegality and immorality committed by our legislators when they raided the National Treasury, obtained ₱3 million and divided same among themselves. The people called them highway robbers and other unprintable names. From Plaza Guipit they marched to Malacañang Palace

and appealed to the Chief Executive, President Sergio Osmeña, to require the law-makers to return to the National Treasury the money they had obtained or else grant similar 3-1/2 years back pay to the poor, impoverished, small government employees.

Visibly irked by such righteous indignation, our legislators decided to punish the leaders of the demonstration. The Solons formed a Special Congressional Investigating Committee and summoned the leaders of the demonstration for purposes of investigation.

When the National Executive Secretary of the Democratic Alliance was called to testify, he took his oath but refused to answer any questions, and instead he questioned the legality of Congress. He said:

"With all due respect to the Honorable, the Chairman and members of the Investigating Committee, the Democratic Alliance, through its National Executive Secretary, in its sincere desire to protect and preserve the Constitution of the Philippines, hereby respectfully serves notice that it refuses to submit to the investigation on the following grounds: (a) Said investigation is not being conducted in connection with any proposed legislation; (b) the Investigating Committee is illegal; and (c) Congress itself is illegal. After having been elected representative from Iloilo, the Honorable Chairman of the Investigating Committee accepted the position of Judge of the Court of First Instance of the Free Area of Panay. And because he had held the position of judge of the Court of First Instance he had forfeited his right to sit in Congress as such representative, as provided by Section 16, Article VI of the Constitution which reads:

"No Senator or member of the House of Representatives may hold any other office in the Government without forfeiting his seat."

And because the two other members of the Committee, had likewise accepted other positions in the government, like the Chairman, they had also forfeited their seats in

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Congress. The Congressional Investigating Committee, therefore has no authority to conduct investigation. It has no right to investigate me and I refuse to answer its questions!"

By the same token, because 80% of the senators and representatives had accepted other positions in the Government; and not only that; they even passed a resolution declaring war against the Government of the Philippines, with more reasons they had forfeited their seats in Congress. They had no authority to create such an Investigating Committee because Congress itself is illegal!"

When the DA National Executive Secretary was warned by the reporters that the Congressional Investigating Committee had the power to send him to jail indefinitely until the time he was willing to submit to the investigation, he replied. "I am aware of the implications of what I am doing. But I would rather languish in jail so that our Constitution might live than remain scot free and see the fundamental law of our land being flouted, trampled upon and mutilated!"

After a consultation with the Senators and other representatives the members of the Investigating Committee decided not to order the arrest of the National Executive Secretary of the Democratic Alliance.

Instead, they enacted a law granting 3-1/2 years backpay to the other government employees.

Once more the Constitution of the Philippines triumphed! Once again reason prevailed over force.

Sisters and Brothers, I know this personally to be true, because the National Executive Secretary of the Democratic Alliance happened to be yours truly.

The latest issue of our Cabletow (October) carries a very enlightening editorial which reads in part as follows: "Masonry forbids discussion or partisan politics or religion inside a Lodge because of the possibility of its promoting dissension."

We are not violating any of the

provisions of our Masonic Constitution, because in the first place we are not inside a Lodge, and secondly, because we are not discussing partisan politics or religion. We are merely expressing our opinion on the burning issues of the day so that there might be light.

According to the editorial of our Cabletow, "bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote." Therefore, our Cabletow is enjoining us to exercise our God-given right to vote for the good of our country and answer the two questions with a resounding *NO*.

I am not campaigning, but I would have you know that come election day, I shall vote for Benitez, Osias and Antonino.

I vote for Miss Helen Benitez not only because she happens to be the worthy daughter of an equally worthy father, our Illustrious and MW Conrado Benitez, but because she is eminently qualified to tackle the duties of a Senator and take good care of the education of our youth — the hope of our land.

I vote for MW Brother Camilo Osias, because he has been tried many, many times and been always found to be true and trusty, the fearless guardian of our Freedoms in Congress. During the consideration of several bills which tended to amend the provision of the third sentence of Section 5 of Article XIV of the Constitution which reads: "OPTIONAL RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION SHALL BE MAINTAINED IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS NOW AUTHORIZED BY LAW, Brother Osias, stood up, filibustered and shouted to the four winds his vehement opposition to such an attempt to amend the Constitution; and the proposed bill did not pass into law.

Once again, the freedom of thought

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was preserved in our Constitution!

I shall vote for Senator Gaudencio Antonino, not only because he is a worthy brother Master Mason, but because he has a sacred mission to perform. You will recall that despite all entreaties, threats and intimidations by the other congressman and senators, he refused to be turned back from denouncing the immoral and illegal act committed by our congressmen. His lone voice resounded through the halls of Congress, denouncing the illegality and the immorality of the excessive allowances which the congressmen voted for themselves to the tune of ₱250,000.00 each — ₱250,000.00 times 120 meant ₱30,000,000.00 for allowances alone. Congress now proposes to increase the number of representatives by 60 or one-half; that would mean an additional amount of ₱15,000,000.00 or a total of ₱45,000,000.00 for the allowances. Thanks to the relentless vigilance and continuous fight on the part of Brother Gaudencio Antonino, the said excessive congressional allowances did not pass.

That's how I shall vote. I am not

## CONFERENCE OF GRAND MASTERS OF MASONS

During the third week of February, 1968, the annual Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America will be held in Washington, D.C. Our MW Mariano Q. Tinio, Grand Master of Masons in the Philippines will be an honored guest on that occasion. Last year we paved the way for this to be a precedent setting year by suggesting that the Conference delete the words "in North America" from their title and open the membership to all Grand Masters in Grand Jurisdictions that are in amity.

Our Grand Lodge strongly urges this proposal be adopted. In prep-

telling you whom to vote. Neither is this partisan politics, because Miss Helen Benitez is a Nacionalista, Osias belongs to the Liberal party, and Brother Gaudencio Antonino is an independent.

Therefore let us have more active participation in civic and government affairs.

Let us have more Masonry among Masons and more Masons in politics.

Let us have more Masons run as candidates for positions in the national, provincial and local governments.

Let us exemplify by our very actions and deeds the splendid theme of this Tenth Annual Convention of District No. 8.

"Let us vow at the altar of God that we shall, to the utmost of our ability, maintain, support and defend the Constitution of the Philippines and the laws and landmarks of our country."

Let us pool our resources together and to the utmost of our power, oppose every form of tyranny over the lives of men that the freedom of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.

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aration therefore, the 1967 Annual Communication of this Grand Lodge approved a budget provision to cover the expenses anticipated in connection therewith.

We look forward to the prospect that in 1969, our Most Worshipful Grand Master will be attending, not as an honored guest, but as a member thereof, in equality with all others, as true Masons should meet, act, and part on all such occasions.

May this be the will of the G.<sup>o</sup>, A.<sup>o</sup>, O.<sup>o</sup>, T.<sup>o</sup>, U and His design on the Tracing Board to be implemented.

*Raymond E. Wilmarth, PGM*