

- Officials need to remember and practice the basic rules of ethics.

NATURAL HAZARD

The warning of Senator Laurel that there is erosion of faith in duly constituted authority is an understatement. It is more accurate to say that the people have practically lost all faith in government and that there now exists a tide of cynicism. The proposed solution, a code of ethics, is so dependent on good faith among our legislators that the obvious impotence of such a code need not be dwelt upon. The discussion among the senators regarding this proposal which touched on lack of personal example from the President while well taken, also misses the real significance of our present state of affairs. The public has lost much, if not all, faith in our existing government not because some legislators are crooks or that there is corruption in the bureaucracy, but because these practices are being

institutionalized by our politicians. Our public officials have made it a practice to protect one another, to act as a solid body, or more accurately, as a distinct and privileged class, to the detriment of the common welfare. It is this that has killed faith in government.

People are inclined to regard lack of scruples among a few rotten eggs in both houses of Congress or in the executive branch as a natural hazard of all societies. But it is another thing when laws are made or enforced deliberately and unequivocally to build and feed a certain group for no other reason than that this group is comprised of elected officials. One begins to imagine that election time has become, not the means for choosing officials after hearing diverse ideas, it is a war between the electorate and the candidate

who is harassed and squeezed for all he is worth on the theory that once in office he will be a different, privileged, being. Election is a *rite de passage*, an initiation phase wherein an ordinary citizen metamorphoses into a different creature if elected.

The allowances of congressmen, their increasing wealth and vested interests, are just symptoms of the basic disease that has caused the death of faith in government. It is actually the fact that politicians act as a body to protect their own members. This is why justice becomes so horribly delayed.

This is why even the anti-graft law is never enforced, why in the recent plebiscite our legislators not only wanted to increase their number they also wanted to have a large representation in an assembly that would restudy our Constitution. In other words, elected officials have a bond of loyalty, a sense of obligation, to their fellow politicians and not to the people they represent. This is why so many can get away with murder when we have enough laws without a code of ethics to nail a sizable population of our elected officials. *Alfredo R. Roces, The Manila Times, March 6, 1968.*

PERSUASION

We are more easily persuaded, in general, by the reasons we ourselves discover than by those which are given to us by others. — *Blaise Pascal, Pensees, 1670*