

Luncheon Remarks of Sangacala Baraguir

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Philippine politics was once called a national sport, a dominant institution that powerfully influenced the way of life of our people.

If you look back some six years ago, during the premartial law days, you will remember painfully and with regrets a fragmented and very decadent Philippine Society. Politics was the culprit. It did not only take its toll on the morals and lives of our beloved countrymen but also threatened the solidarity and security of our nations. It was thus that our beloved President, Ferdinand E. Marcos, declared martial law. With the law, we had to forego for sometime some of our democratic processes, an example of which was the right of suffrage, and rightfully, because this was the most abused right, if I must say.

This year, however, President Marcos in a bold step towards normalization decided to hold an election for the Interim Batasang Pambansa on April 7, 1978. I am now wondering if our people are aware of the total significance of the President's decision. To my mind this will be a test of our political maturity, the ultimate change we have made from the politics of the old and morally sick society to our present New and Vigorous Society. Shall we pass this test? Only after April 7 can we tell.

In this connection, I consider your seminar a very timely and most relevant to the present-day political struggle. I know that in holding this seminar at this time or during the election season, you have no intention of dipping your hands into the contest except, I pray, to cast your ballots. But then my friends, as members of the PPSA which delves into the principles and conduct of government, it becomes your solemn duty to actively participate in the affairs of this government not by just casting your vote but more so by protecting the sanctity of that ballot by putting up a concerted effort

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for an orderly, peaceful, honest and clean election. As worthy apostles of the New Society, you have fundamental obligations in charting the destiny of our nation.

I have always considered it a basic obligation of people in a democracy like ours to uphold the efficiency and prestige of the government, to abide by the tenets of the New Society and actively participate in the total efforts to build an economically and socially sound and progressive nation and be always militant in safeguarding the gains made in this direction.

National integrity, my friends, can only be achieved through the combined efforts and talents of our people. Of course, in matters of choosing our leaders, we tend to divide ourselves as for or against something or someone. There is really no harm in disagreement because democracy thrives on disagreement. What is bad is that in disagreeing we tend to be divisive and intolerant of each other and of each other's views. Let there be disagreement if need be, but definitely, let there be no dissension, no divisiveness among us. Be critical but be fair in your criticisms. Be constructive, not destructive. This is what I call civic discipline, a good attribute of responsible citizenship.

As we choose our delegates to the Interim Batasang Pambansa, let us look forward to our future and envision the kind of life we want. Remember that we only get the kind of government we deserve. The sovereign will reside in you.

In conclusion, let me draw your attention to the fact that the whole world will be watching us this election season. Remember that April 7, 1978 will test our political maturity and political maturity, my friends, is measured by the degree to which the people take interest in public affairs and participate in cooperative efforts such as in choosing the leaders who will man the government. I trust that as disciples of political science, you will not only share in the efforts but actually lead our citizenry in striving for the wise use of the ballot and its sanctity.

I thank you.