

Men may come and men may go. The Hacienda remains where it was three hundred years ago and will so remain, serene and indifferent. Don Esteban Rodriguez de Figueroa, the generous soul who made possible the founding of the Colegio de San Jose by a grant of the estate under his will, in all probability, never dreamed that the grant would give rise to a stormy history. And if he were alive now he will probably say: "*In the beginning this land was mine. And then...*"

THE NEED FOR A STRONG JUDICIARY

*Judge Conrado V. Sanchez **

Revered since ages past is the universally accepted classic concept that courts are the temples of right. Nations and men in all climes look up to the courts in their ever-recurrent search for truth and justice. To those schooled in the ways of democracy, courts are the zealous guardians of their constitutional guarantees—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Where other remedies have failed, men have sought refuge behind the solid ramparts of the judiciary, the last bulwark in the protection of their rights. By precept and statute, our courts are clothed with the power to protect rights and redress wrongs. Indeed, government and people must accept with hallowed resignation the courts' pronouncement of the law.

Indispensable ministers of the courts and holders of the scepter of authority are the Judges. Great are their powers, heavy their responsibilities. Singled out in importance is their jurisdiction to sit in judgment over their fellow men. But piercing the shard of dignity and reverence, we stare at the bare, cold fact that "*judges at last are but men, subject to the imperfections and frailties of other men, encompassed by error, seasoned with sin and fettered by fallibility.*"

These postulates, inevitable as we must accept them to be, bring to the fore the necessity for an elevated type of judicial administration. The importance of this governmental function must have galvanized the wits of Aristotle into the formulation of that venerated truism, "*justice is the first concern of mankind*". Our Supreme Court gave expression to this apothegm with the judicial pronouncement that "*the administration of the law is a matter of vital public concern.*" Thus it is, that the Lawyer's

* Seventh Branch, Court of First Instance of Manila. Ll. B., Ll. M.

Code of Ethics prefaces its canons with the lofty ideal that in the Philippines, "where the stability of courts and of all departments of government rests upon the approval of the people, it is peculiarly essential that the system of establishing and dispensing justice be developed to a high point of efficiency and so maintained that the public shall have absolute confidence in the integrity and impartiality of its administration." That same preface sounded a warning that the future of this Republic "to a great extent, depends upon our maintenance of justice pure and unsullied."

We must take stock of the present situation. Admittedly, we are living in a troubled world. Internally, our problem of peace and order has risen to the stature of a steep mountain. By now it may appear trite, but nonetheless true, that the morality of many is several notches below the desirable. Some have shown utter disregard of the fundamental difference between right and wrong. Others have worshipped no God other than the Golden Calf. And still many there are who have exhibited undisguised contempt for the law. The corrosive effects of moral bankruptcy and spiritual blackout remain unchecked. This situation stares at us—the citizens—coldly, relentlessly, unavoidably. We must face these problems with courage and firmness.

Now, therefore, more than ever, we feel the need for a strong judiciary; for judges whose erudition and pronouncement command respect, men of the highest type of proven ability, finite, human, and above all, men with names untarnished. For these are the judges who bear the hallmark of confidence and inspire a justified belief in them that justice will be done at all times, in all places and under all circumstances.

Conserve the faith of the people in the judiciary, and we help bolster the people's faith in our government, our country. Debase the judiciary and doom's day may not be far distant. Where justice ends, tyranny begins.

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