

Challenge to the Citizenry

By Teofisto Guingona

Friends, we are gathered here today in the wake of national crisis to perform a vital task. Our constitution gives government the power to govern, to tax, to pass just laws. It also grants to people the rights of free speech and assembly and the right to know.

But public office is a public trust. If that trust is betrayed — then people have a right to know who and how the trust was breached, when and where the deadly distortions took place. Otherwise — if the avenues are blocked for vital information, if the doors to government recourse are unduly slammed — especially if done by the very persons mandated to uphold that trust — then governance becomes a sham, accountability is lost and even a restive nation maybe doomed to perdition.

In such sordid situations, it is not only the right but also the duty of citizens to resolutely response to the challenge.

This people's congress does not render a verdict. It seeks to ferret out in an orderly proceedings the presentation of facts. It is not unjust. It gives notice and opportunity to all who may feel aggrieved.

It does not usurp the functions of any public office or function. It only exercises acts in accordance with the constitution, specifically Article XIII, Section XV of the same. It is our right... our duty... and our hope... to help shape the destiny of this nation.

Those in power may resort to ridicule this humble process; they will only end up making a mockery of themselves. They threaten us with reprisals. No effect. We will not relent. We will pursue this process with vim vigor and vitality — confident that in the end — the people will persevere! Mabuhay ang taong buhay!
Mabuhay ang Filipino!