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## Parliamentarians against corruption

*October 19, 2014 9:47 pm*

THE plunge to the bottom of the image of Filipino lawmakers has made Filipinos more cynical about the government as a whole and politicians in general.

Of the two major national parties in our country during the post WW II period, the Liberal Party, more than the Nacionalista Party, was always the more corrupt in the eyes of our people. It was an LP leader, Senate President Jose Dira Avelino of Samar, who became notorious for saying "What are we in power for?" Avelino had spoken in Spanish and said "Para que estamos en poder?" at an LP caucus precisely called to discuss how to combat allegations of corrupt doings by LPs—including the incumbent President Elpidio Quirino. Perhaps the notoriety of this quotation has unjustly erased all the good things that Avelino did and stood for from the time he was a contemporary of Manuel L. Quezon. He, for instance, authored the Workmen's Compensation Act and other laws good for the people and our Republic.

Today's Liberal Party, however, cannot possibly be excused for its crimes against our nation and its betrayal of our Republic and the Constitution. President B. S. C. Aquino 3rd, Budget Secretary Florencio Abad, DILG Secretary Mar Roxas, and others in the top leadership of the LP used government money to bribe congressmen and senators to impeach and oust former Chief Justice Renato Corona. They abused the pork barrel. They invented the unconstitutional Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP) and illegally used DAP funds. They have allowed the Philippine National Police to become a den of thieves in high officers' uniforms and positions. Under their watch smuggling in the Bureau of Customs have multiplied six times that of the average amount lost to smuggling during the terms of President Estrada and President Macapagal-Arroyo.

President Aquino, supported by the LP bigwigs, is undermining the rule of law, trashing the Supreme Court and the Judiciary. Aquino, supported by LP congressmen and senators have taken over the "power over the purse" that the Constitution grants Congress precisely to keep the balance of power among the three branches of government. This is happening because the lawmakers that make up the vast majority in both houses of Congress are corrupt and would rather get personal profit through Malacañang Palace than preserve the common good.

In the essay on Page 1 by J. T. Gatbonton we learn that political theorists are now calling the destruction of sound political and governance principles by politicians and people in power "Philippinization."

This descent into the bottom of our governance and political life makes news about the GOPAC campaign music to our ears.

GOPAC is the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption. It is a worldwide alliance of members of congresses and parliaments working together to combat corruption, strengthen good government, and uphold the rule of law. Based in Ottawa, Canada, GOPAC has 50 national chapters on 5 continents. GOPAC supports its members' efforts through original research, global anti-corruption capacity-building, and international peer support. Those who wish to know more about GOPAC could go on the web to [gopacnetwork.org](http://gopacnetwork.org), on Twitter at [twitter.com/GOPAC\\_Eng](https://twitter.com/GOPAC_Eng), and on

Facebook at [facebook.com/gopacnetwork](https://facebook.com/gopacnetwork).

The other day, which was the inaugural Global Ethics Day, GOPAC, through its latest position paper, "Preventing a Tragedy of the Commons," reiterated its call for parliamentarians to stand against conflicts of interest for the improvement of integrity in parliament and a successful fight against corruption.

A tragedy indeed is that in some places, and we notice it to be very true in the Philippines, parliamentarians refuse to see that conflicts of interest are at the root of many current corruption problems. GOPAC is offering this new position paper to help reform-minded parliamentarians to act against or at least prevent conflicts of interest and thereby strengthen the integrity of democratic institutions.

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