

Elections 1967

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A REPORT

TO
THE

FILIPINO
PEOPLE

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "F. Soc Rodrigo", is written in a cursive style across the bottom of the cover.

SEN. F. SOC RODRIGO

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

SENATE

MANILA

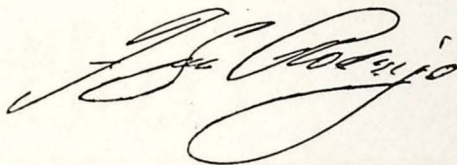
April 15, 1961

My dear countrymen:

In 1955, you elected me as a member of the Philippine Senate. In this last year of my term, I consider it my duty to render an accounting to you of the manner in which I discharged the trust which you reposed in me.

This report contains only the salient points — the milestones in my career as senator. Space will not allow more, I hope, however, that it will give you a clear concept of my performance as your duly elected legislator. I hope that you will find it satisfactory.

Sincerely yours



FRANCISCO SOC RODRIGO

THE CIVIL SERVICE LAW

No government can function efficiently unless it is manned by a corps of civil service personnel whose appointment and promotion are based on merit instead of on political patronage and personal influence. For this reason, our Constitution provides that appointments in the Civil Service "shall be made only according to merit and fitness, to be determined as far as practicable by competitive examination."

When I was named chairman of the Senate Committee on Civil Service, I immediately embarked on the task of updating and strengthening our civil service law. I found out that we were still governed by an outmoded law which was promulgated way back in 1901. I discovered also that out of more than 300,000 government employees, approximately 100,000 were non-eligibles.

There was a general feeling of demoralization within the ranks of our government workers. There was hardly any incentive to make good because greater premium was given to political connections than merit.

With the help of the Civil Service Commission and other experts, I authored and sponsored Senate Bill No. 133

the late Senator Claro M. Recto in the classic debate on the Noli-Fili bill. No debate has aroused as much interest and passion as this.

The issue involved was simple, but it was obscured and distorted by partisan and sectarian prejudice. The issue was simply: Should the reading of the unexpurgated texts of Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere" and "El Filibusterismo" be made compulsory by law in all schools, colleges and universities, both public and private?

My objection to the bill was limited to the compulsion aspect. Compulsion militates against the basic individual freedoms guaranteed in a democracy. Compulsion is especially pernicious when it invades the domain of religious conscience, compelling a citizen to violate the injunctions of his religion in order to comply with the commands of the state. Rizal himself, in a letter to Jose Ma. Basa dated January, 1889, expressly cautioned against compelling anybody to read the Noli.

While objecting to compulsion, I advocated positive and effective measures to interest and enable our people to read Rizal's works. In order to make the Noli and Fili available to our countrymen, I proposed the appropriation of P500,000.00 (later reduced by the committee to P300,000.00) for the printing and free distribution of translations of the two novels into the various Philippine languages.

After long and painful debates, a compromise measure was enacted, eliminating the element of compulsion and incorporating my positive suggestions to encourage and enable our people to read Rizal's writings — not in an oppressive atmosphere of compulsion but in the healthy climate of freedom.

The law, as finally enacted, is Republic Act No. 1425.

BILL TO SCREEN AND DEPORT OVERSTAYING REFUGEES

The problem of overstaying refugees has been vexing our government since 1949. As of that year, approximately 2,700 out of the 3,000,000 Chinese who fled from the China mainland to escape the advancing communists sought refuge in the Philippines. The rest were given asylum in almost all other civilized countries of the world.

For almost 12 years now, nobody has had the courage to face and solve this problem in our country. Nobody has come out with any practical solution.

Meanwhile, our failure to settle this matter has given our country a "blackeye," both internally and internationally. Internally, because it is common knowledge that these aliens are made "milking cows" of unscrupulous government officials and political leaders. Internationally, because the free countries of the world wonder why the Philippines,

which is known as the show-window of Christianity and democracy in this part of the world, has failed to solve this problem in accordance with Christian tenets and Free World policies.

Political demagogues shout "outright and indiscriminate deportation," although they know that this is impractical unless we are disposed to ditch these aliens into the sea, or throw them back into communist tyranny, or go to war to compel Formosa to accept them. The sad fact is that most government officials do not want this problem solved because they would lose a lucrative source of ill-gotten "grease money."

As for me, I have always tried to face such problems with boldness and statesmanship. I have always shunned insincere political stunts which get us nowhere in solving our very serious problems.

I therefore took it upon myself to offer a just and realistic solution to this problem.

After a thorough study of the policies adopted by other free countries of the world, I authored Senate Bill No. 7 in 1958. This bill proposes to thoroughly screen, through our courts, all the overstaying refugees. They are given 6 months within which to submit themselves for judicial screening, else they would be deported or interned. The court hearings would be public. Previous notices would

be sent to the Solicitor General, PC Provincial Commander, Immigration Commissioner, Justice of the Peace, and to the public in general (by means of newspaper and posted notices) in order to afford everybody a chance to interpose objections and present evidence against any particular alien. Decisions of the Court of First Instance are appealable to the appellate courts.

After hearing each case individually, the courts will grant asylum only to those who are found to be genuine refugees from communist tyranny and who, furthermore, are "desirable aliens" with clean records, contributing to our economic and social progress and not burdens to the community or unfair competitors to Filipino labor and business.

I have no doubt that, had this measure been passed, we would have solved this problem by now. The undesirable aliens would have already been deported.

But, sad to say, this bill was misrepresented and distorted by blind prejudice and selfish motives. It became a "very hot potato" which nobody dared touch.

The result? The problem has not been solved until now. All those aliens are still in our country. The few officials who continue to "milk" them are happy. But not the Filipino people. And, certainly, not the Free World which calls on all free peoples everywhere to stand firm and united against communism.

PROPOSED ELECTION CODE

From the time I started serving as senator in 1956, I sponsored and relentlessly fought for the enactment of the proposed Revised Election Code. The measure aims to insure clean and honest elections. It plugs loopholes in the present law and provides all conceivable safeguards against frauds, vote-buying, misuse of public funds and facilities for electioneering purposes, tampering with election returns, and other reprehensible practices which pollute the sanctity of the ballot.

Even when I was still a member of the Nacionalista Party, I fought hard to have this bill approved by the Senate. However, my efforts were frustrated by party leaders who did not want to let go of the unfair advantages afforded by the present law to the ruling party during elections.

I assure you that I shall continue my crusade for the enactment of this measure.

FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGALLY CONSTRUCTED DIKES AND FISHPONDS

A few rich fishpond owners have invaded public rivers and streams in the provinces of Pampanga, Bulacan and others for the purpose of enlarging their private fisheries. A few rich people likewise appropriated the communal fishing grounds of thousands of poor fishermen along the shores of Manila Bay, converting them into fishponds.

I fought a relentless battle against this pernicious and illegal land grabbing. I was pitted against the power of money and political connections.

Sad to say, I failed to get the cooperation of the present administration. But I am continuing and shall ever continue my crusade for the rights of our poor fishermen and against the destructive covetousness of some greedy rich.

FIGHT AGAINST SUSPENSION OF SERGING OSMEÑA

The suspension of Congressman Sergio Osmeña, Jr. involves the vital constitutional guarantee of parliamentary immunity. This immunity is most important to the people's representatives in Congress for it affords them the needed freedom to express their opinions without fear of reprisals from a vindictive majority or a vengeful president.

It was for this reason that I participated actively, from beginning to end, in the fight against this suspension.

I appeared and argued before the 15-man committee of the House. I helped prepare Serging's defense on the floor. I was one of the lawyers who presented the case to the Supreme Court. I accompanied Serging to different parts of the country to explain this vital issue to our people.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court did not adjudge the issue squarely, but based its decision solely on the doctrine of separation of powers.

EXPOSÉS

Following the policy of placing country above party and self, I was instrumental in exposing to Congress and to the people the following anomalies:—

1. RAPE OF DEMOCRACY IN PASAY

The infamous "Pasay Bill" sought to reverse by legislation the mandate of the Pasay electorate in the last local elections. Had I not exposed this Machiavellian scheme, the President would have been empowered to appoint additional Nacionalista councilors for Pasay, thereby reversing the control of its City Council from an LP majority, as mandated by the electorate, to an NP majority as dictated by Congress and the President.

Because of this exposé, similar plots to do the same thing to Baguio, Iligan and Legaspi were frustrated.

2. PARDON OF DEAD PRISONERS

I was the one who exposed the grant of presidential pardon to dead persons:—

<i>Name</i>	<i>Dated Died</i>	<i>Date Granted Pardon</i>
1. Felipe Guarin	June 18, 1959	July 4, 1959
2. Sahidula Ajad	Dec. 16, 1958	July 4, 1959
3. Luis Obella	Dec. 11, 1955	Jan. 6, 1960
4. Juan Arce	Nov. 11, 1959	Jan. 6, 1960

3. DISMISSAL OF DEAD JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

I also exposed the dismissal of a Justice of the Peace who was already dead. The president tried to make a "big show" of cleaning up the government by dismissing small fry. Among those he dismissed was Judge Eduardo Abesamis, Justice of the Peace of Echague and Angandanán, Isabela. The dismissal order was dated March 19, 1960. The records show that Judge Abesamis died on September 22, 1959—6 months before he was dismissed.

4. ILLICIT CAMPAIGN COLLECTIONS

I was also instrumental in exposing the boast by a Department Secretary that he collected P4-½ million for the 1957 campaign funds of the Nacionalista Party. Instead of reprimanding said secretary, the President rewarded him with an important foreign assignment.

5. SCANDALS: PHHC, DOLLAR RESERVE, BARTER, REPARATIONS, ETC.

Together with Senator Cuenco, I was instrumental in exposing the following scandals:—

(a) PHHC.—The scandalous buying spree made by the PHHC after the death of President Magsaysay and before the 1957 presidential election. The PHHC squandered millions upon millions of the people's money in unjustified purchases at fantastically high prices of lands useless for

its purpose. The reason behind this? To raise campaign funds for President Garcia in 1957.

(b) DOLLAR RESERVE. — Our dollar reserve in the Central Bank, which was approximately \$230 million at the death of President Magsaysay, was depleted to **nothing** within a period of only 9 months. The cause? Enormous dollar allocations were granted, mostly to aliens, in order to raise millions for President Garcia's campaign funds.

(c) BARTER. — Barter permits in huge amounts were granted to a few rich exporters who promised to contribute juicy sums to said campaign fund. Even products with ready dollar markets, like copra, were bartered. This caused further serious dollar depletion.

(d) REPARATIONS.—Reparations from Japan which is destined to compensate for the blood, sweat and tears of all Filipinos were channeled to a few favored proteges. The luxurious yacht SS "Lapu-Lapu" was given top priority. The result? Millions upon millions of our countrymen who were the real victims of Japanese atrocities have not benefited from reparations.

(e) ANG CHIO KIO. — The Chinaman Ang Chio Kio, hijacker of the PAL plane who killed two Filipinos on board, was granted presidential pardon while thousands of Filipino prisoners still languish in jail for less serious crimes. Reason? Influence and money.

ATTENDANCE IN SESSIONS, COMMITTEE HEARINGS AND PARTICIPATION IN LEGISLATIVE WORK

In order to live up to the expectations of the people who voted me into office, I followed the policy of utmost dedication to my duties as legislator.

My record of attendance and punctuality in Senate sessions is second to none. No senator can surpass the record of my participation in committee hearings. My record of fiscalization and active participation in the consideration of bills is outstanding.

This might sound boastful, but I consider it my duty, as your duly elected representative, to report this to you. The record of the Senate will bear me out in these.

REDUCED ASSETS

When I became a senator in 1956, I submitted my sworn statement of assets and liabilities. My net assets then amounted to P565,103.54.

Last year, 1960, after almost five years of honest service to our country, I submitted another sworn statement. My net assets went down to P394,637.63, or a reduction of P170,465.91.

But I do not regret this financial sacrifice, because I believe that public office is a mission of service and sacrifice,

not a means to "provide for the future security" of public officials.

MISCELLANEOUS

On other matters, too many to enumerate in detail, I:—

1. Led the fight in the Senate against the iniquitous "Margin Tax";
2. Participated actively in the drafting and enactment of the Barrio Charter Law;
3. Consistently opposed "junkets." I have never been in one.
4. Repeatedly condemned the abuse of the President's contingent fund;
5. Consistently opposed the wasteful and unsystematic system of "pork barrel";
6. Helped actively in the enactment of the Anti-Graft Law;
7. Helped push the law nationalizing the rice and corn industry;
8. Espoused the development and propagation of the Filipino National Language;
9. Supported bills for the advancement of arts and sciences;
10. Espoused the cause of labor without doing injustice to the rights of capital;

11. Batted for the dispersal of powers of our over-centralized government;

12. Advocated free enterprise as against controlled economy, with the necessary government protection to our infant industries;

13. Consistently came out in favor of providing the necessary incentives to capital investments;

14. Advocated government aid based on self help instead of outright doles;

15. Defended individual freedoms guaranteed in a democracy;

16. Advocated close friendly relations with free nations, especially our Asian neighbors;

17. Supported actively all health measures;

18. Blocked politically motivated promotions in the Armed Forces which would demoralize our army ranks;

19. Fought for veterans' rights;

20. Advocated well balanced education giving due weight to spiritual, material and physical factors.

RELIGION AND POLITICS

One last word: Almost from the time of my election six years ago, some people with more malice than good in-

tention have dubbed me "the spokesman of the Catholic Church."

Both as a Catholic and as a Senator, I have always condemned the implications of this dubious compliment and have done everything on my part to discourage it. Were a spokesman for her cause needed, the Catholic Church certainly can call on better spokesman than my humble self; and were this to mean an encroachment on the independence of the State and its elected officers, I would resent the implication that I could ever lend myself to be used as an instrument for such encroachment; and I would resent as well the implication that the Catholic Church, of which I am a humble member, could ever be guilty of such encroachment. Were such an encroachment ever to be attempted, a Senator who is a Catholic, like myself, would be the first one to resist it vigorously on the basis of the Catholic Church's own teachings.

As I close my term as Senator, let me restate once again my stand on the thorny problem of religion and politics. Let me summarize here what I do believe on this fundamental issue:

First, I believe that under our Constitution every public officer is bound by his oath of office to recognize and protect the freedom of the State from the interference of the Church in those things that concern the temporal order, as well as to recognize and protect the freedom of the Church

from the interference of the State in those things that concern the eternal salvation of souls.

Second, these two God-ordained societies, though distinct from one another, like the two wheels of a cart, are both indispensable to man for his happiness here and hereafter. It should therefore be the constant effort of public officers and of every public-minded citizen to maintain cooperation between the State and the Church and harmony between the laws of the State and the legitimate demands of religious conscience.

Third, I believe that this spirit of harmony and cooperation is fostered not by favoring one religion over another which the Constitution cannot allow, but by recognizing the freedom of conscience and the equality of all the churches and religions before the law as a matter of right and not as a matter of favor. To say this is not to say that there is no distinction between true and false religion, between good and bad morals. It is but to say that despite those distinctions our Constitution, aware of its duty to preserve social peace and civic friendship, does not impose upon the government any duty, or grant to it any right, to discriminate against any citizen or group of citizens solely on the basis of their religious beliefs, even though such beliefs be false or erroneous.

Fourth, I believe finally that the religious faith of a public officer is relevant to the conduct of his office. To

say this is not to advocate a religious test for public office. It is but to say that the religious faith of a man of integrity will influence not only his private but also his public conduct. He cannot and must not divest himself in public life of those principles of justice and charity imbued in him by his religion, which apart from giving him vision and courage in the crisis of private life, gives him also valid standards of morality by which to measure his decisions in public life.

On this point, I can do no better than quote the words of Senator Kennedy during his presidential campaign:

“Whatever issue may come before me as a public officer, I will make my decision in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be in the national interest, and without regard to outside religious pressure or dictates. But if the time should ever come - and I do not conceive any conflict can be remotely possible when my office would require me to either violate my conscience or violate the national interest, then I would resign the office. And I hope any conscientious public servants would do likewise.”

These words express what every public officer of my faith or of any other faith believes in his own heart, and which often is one's only reward at the end of a political career that he can be the State's good servant, only if he remains God's servant first.

