

22 June 1983

Professor Bartolome C. Carale  
College of Law  
University of the Philippines  
Diliman, Quezon City

Dear Dean Carale,

I understand that you thought my letter to Class '83, protesting against the Meralco Theatre recognition day ceremonies, important enough to actually merit public comment. Since this comment comes from you, I feel genuinely complimented, and should like to believe that you intended such comment in that spirit. After all, we have been friends and colleagues long enough.

Just to make sure that my position on the subject matter of my letter is not misunderstood, I should like to furnish you copy of the same, together with a copy of a statement on that letter which was solicited by the Collegian.

I understand that your objection to my letter is anchored on the fact that it was written in complete ignorance of the facts, or more specifically as to the reason for the holding of the Recognition Day ceremonies at the Meralco Theatre -- which was, so I was to learn subsequently, as a gesture of protest against the ban on college

graduations this year. On this charge of ignorance of the facts, I hereby most regretfully and abjectly plead absolute and unqualified guilt.

Nevertheless, I would like to believe that the point of my letter, which I endeavored to amplify in the statement, is a valid one, namely: the need for the University to assert and maintain at all times a posture of independence in respect of the Government.

I contend that the stout, vigorous and courageous assertion of institutional independence by the University, especially in respect of the Government, is a duty which derives precisely from its status as a university. Even as a state-supported institution, the University is still a university, and is not and ought not to comport itself as if it were a mere department, ministry, bureau or agency of the Government. To do so would be to renounce, to spurn or even to scorn its nature as a university.

I am aware that these observations about the proper relationship which should obtain between the University and the Government are familiar, and, I believe, indisputable and actually undisputed -- this, notwithstanding President Marcos' recent strictures against impatience on the part of the students, followed most appropriately by President Angara's caveat about academic freedom not being absolute. Even so, I believe such observations, however trite and truistic they may be, are nonetheless worth repeating. This is so for within the University itself,

there appears to be an emerging urge on the part of some elements to compete with the UP Law Alumni Association (UPLAA) for the privilege of performing the now infamous -- or if you please, famous if fatuous -- annual ritual of licking the in-between of the toes of the President, a ritual which is pompously and misleadingly styled as the Annual Law Alumni Homecoming!

For the UPLAA to arrogate this privilege exclusively unto itself is understandable, even forgivable. After all, the President is, it may be plausibly argued, not only unique, preeminent, unequalled and unsurpassable in personal qualities and in accomplishment. Moreover, he is in fact a bona fide card carrying member of the UP Law clan. He is, indeed, truly one of us, in the sense of a full blood brother and not merely as a distant or unwanted cousin.

But for the University itself to pine -- or to be seen to pine -- for participation in our annual rites of obsequiousness and sycophancy, this, I submit, is utterly unacceptable. This is particularly true because under the presidency of Dr. Angara -- whose connections with the Establishment are not only well-known but are indeed well-advertised and pridefully avowed -- even the slightest manifestation of obeisance by the University to the President will confirm the disturbing and still lingering public suspicion that the University, unknown even to its constituency, is now in the midst of its own Babylonian captivity.

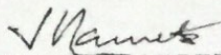
I am not so quizotic as to wish that the widespread and relentless effort to develop, foster and continually enhance a cult about the person of the President can somehow be countered or contained. Nevertheless, it continues to be my forlorn hope that this effort -- to develop and foster a personality cult about the President -- can be accomplished without needlessly, and, perhaps, irretrievably, sacrificing the remaining remnants of the University's diminishing credibility.

I must admit to being emotional -- some, indeed, would say, unreasonably emotional -- about the University's institutional independence. Accordingly, I should like to thank you most sincerely for giving me one more opportunity to unburden myself of my misgivings on the subject.

In closing, permit me to be among the first to congratulate you on your forthcoming deanship.

With assurances of my esteem and regard, I am

Yours sincerely,

  
JOSE C. LAURETA