

An Appeal on Behalf of the Civil Service

We, the undersigned members of the faculty and staff of the College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, are concerned and alarmed at the manner and extent to which Executive Order No. 17 is being implemented by heads of government agencies.

The executive Order provides government officials "broad powers to fire any of their personnel" in the interests of honesty, efficiency, and effectiveness. The intent is to rid the government bureaucracy of perceived perennial problems of corruption and inefficiency, by replacing incompetents with more qualified, honest, and dedicated civil servants.

However, what has resulted from the implementation of the executive order is apparently hasty, ill-advised and misguided dismissal of civil servants. To date, some 200,000 government employees have been laid off. While some of the dismissals may be warranted, what is alarming, is that many of those fired are tenured, career civil servants. Many of those laid off are technically qualified through education and years of experience, as well as through training programs aimed to prepare them for their tasks. Some of them are Career Executive Service Officers who have climbed the top of the civil service ladder through performance and hard work.

As members of an academic community dedicated to the development of an efficient, dedicated and reliable civil service, we view the present purges with concern. We are concerned that the removal of tenured career civil servants who have always maintained continuity in government processes despite changes in political regimes, may lead to gross disruption in the conduct of government business and in the delivery of public services. Moreover, we are concerned that their replacements, though educationally qualified, may not yet have imbibed the values of public service which only those who have spent years in the government can fully appreciate.

We wish to remind the present government that the civil service in any society such as ours is based on the principles of merit and fitness. While

some of our bureaucrats are corrupt, many of them, by virtue of the ethics which their professional associations impose on them, are competent and dedicated. In the long years of one-man rule, the Filipino civil servants have sought to remain politically neutral, aware that they did not owe their loyalty to the ousted President but to the public as a whole.

Let us not make the mistake of the old regime by using the purges to replace politically undesirable civil servants. Let us use the dismissal power wisely, sparingly, and with enlightenment. Let us use it to retain competent and dedicated public employees and to guarantee the continuity of government services, as we dismiss the incompetent and corrupt.

Faculty and Staff of the University of the Philippines
College of Public Administration
27 June 1986