

## Fake news vs real learning

For the longest time people of my generation have longed for the days when debates and discussions on the Senate floor and that of the lower house were classic discourse on law, social issues, and highlighted by the gift of elocution and mastery of the language. Much of what I remember took place between 1969 to 1972 and back then those who would dare stand before the Senate or Congress came highly informed, highly educated, cultured and well mannered as well as well read.



Those days are long gone but thank God that for a few hours some of us who were fortunate enough to watch the CNN Philippines coverage of the Senate hearing on Constitutional amendments, saw silver haired men and women of wisdom from the academe and judiciary, share their views and expertise on why we should and should not tamper with the Constitution as well as the blessings and blight that comes with federalism.

Thanks to committee chairman Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan, we at least got to hear really informed and relatively balanced lectures and insights to the benefits and risks of federalism, more clarity on the role and limitations of "Congress" in determining how or what form of legislative body can be put in place to amend the Constitution, as well as the problems and curse that comes with term limits etc.

I make a big deal of yesterday's educational afternoon considering that a day or so earlier, it was reported that no less than the Speaker of the House and a government official got into a cussing session. Prior to that the public watched a gambling experts yet again raise the issue of "jueteng" in spite of the fact that everyone else in the 7,100 islands of the Philippines already call it STL or Small Town Lottery where the government now collects a tidy sum.

Perhaps it would greatly benefit the members of the House of Representatives as well as the Senate to watch a replay of the hearing yesterday, Feb. 1 so they can all have an idea of what a real "hearing in aid of legislation" is actually like! I compliment the committee of Sen. Pangilinan because they apparently sent a set of questions along with their invitation to the panelists so that the panelists could write, prepare powerpoint presentations or submit their position papers. This helped immensely in guiding the resource persons while placing borders on what needed to be answered or explained. Even company owners and executives can follow this practice by telling others what meetings are about, what is expected of them and give the participants a few days to prepare instead of calling for a meeting and saying, "Now Na!" Nuts!

The best part of the program was the fact that Pangilinan's team invited real experts who were well informed, experienced and did not have a burning zeal for some hidden agenda or loud mouths but with no integrity or intelligence to match. Pangilinan also deserves praise because he did not use his chairmanship as an excuse to butt in 50 percent of the time, and thank God, I did not hear one single legislator interrupt or show boat. I suspect that some people knew they were not in the same league as those truly honorable, respected, experienced and educated resource persons and those "terms" are from the viewers, not something required like "Honorable" or "Your Honor."

All I can hope for now is that someone would send me a souvenir copy!

\* \* \*

FAKE NEWS

The Philippine Star  
Friday, February 2, 2018  
p. 8

FAKE NEWS  
VS  
REAL LEARNING

While I thoroughly enjoyed the hearing under Pangilinan, I can't say the same when I watched the hearing on fake news and blogs by government official that was officiated by Sen. Grace Poe.

Listening to the comments of several guests, it immediately became clear to me that the "independent" bloggers and social media personalities believed in having a double standard of accountability when it comes to blogs or opinions being expressed on social media. They don't want government officials fighting back, talking back or cussing back at them because "government officials" should not. But instead, they expect if not demand that people in government should simply grin and bear it when they are being insulted or subjected to insinuations of corruption or wrongdoing.

But when asked about the accountability or the need to regulate hate and malicious accusations by bloggers and the likes, they all jumped behind their favorite fence: Freedom of Speech or Freedom of the Press.

I would rather that we were all mature and accurate about what we write and dispense with the shallow tactic of malicious insinuations and character assassinations. But since that is not the case, we also cannot have a double standard. We either play by the same rules or nobody gets to impose their rules. Especially those whose hands or keyboards are covered with malice and the blood of character assassination.

What I did come to realize after listening to several people attacking certain government officials for their blogs and tweets, one possible reason they were up in arms is because; whether they like it or not, government has wised up on how to fight fire with fire particularly "government haters" on social media. I get the impression that Mocha Uson in particular, has effectively given the nays a taste of their own medicine and that's what pisses them off. The irony is that they all come from the same specie or community and use the same technology for very much the same purpose. The only difference they have is they have different masters! All together: They are the pot calling the kettle black!