



*“The pen is mightier than the sword.”*

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## **DAYS OF CELEBRITIES ARE GONE**

**By: Ben Emata**

The last elections, though marred by the usual killings and other political disturbances, to our standard, were generally peaceful and successful.

It shows so many changes in the behavior and attitude of the electorates. It was a moment of awakening for everyone after seeing more seriously, through the eyes of the dogs, the sad state of the country.

People have realized the ugly effects of the way elections were practiced ever since. I can predict vote-buying which has always been the major player during the event, will die a natural death. It has been the greatest evil in our exercise of suffrage. It was self-defeating to our principle of liberty. I could see it will not have any effect at all in the coming years because the voters will not honor it in exchange of their precious ballot. Surely, they will still accept the money but will follow the dictates of their conscience. That precisely happened last time and the money coming from major parties presumably fell into the pockets without any condition.

Vote-buying in the Philippines is nearly an accepted form of elections procedure in the system. Every politician deny it vigorously yet nearly all of them are practicing it. This is always the scenario in any political activities in the country. Needless to say, however, this is not part of our culture. It is an illness that cropped up not so long ago and introduced by corrupt politicians. Vote buying was unknown during the elections that took place shortly after World War II more particularly during the time of Quezon, Roxas, Osmena, Quirino and Magsaysay.

I would say it was in the Marcos era that that this practice snowballed and became irresistible to the electorates. It went on for years and the country produced half-baked leaders that led to the terrible situation of the Filipinos. Leadership was in complete disarray planned by wacky politicians.



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Brilliant Filipinos who came from good universities never had a chance to lead because the moneyed and people from the affluent families ruled it out. The right of the people to choose could not be exercised because the money decides for them. By any language, democracy was dead because the right to choose could not be exercised.

Another thing that came up in the last elections that truly stunned everyone was the apparent ineffectiveness of the charms of celebrities to gather votes. In many elections, they just sing and dance onstage and almost overnight they become senators, congressman or whatever. This time, except for the minor positions in the outskirts, no one got through in the top 12 of the senate race. No one came out in the congressional contests as well as in the gubernatorial and mayoralty. People think their appearance in public should be limited to just entertainment and nothing more. It looks like the celebrities are finished.

Well, a lot of celebrities had been tried and no one turned out well and good. They never made good in the legislature. Aside from Erap who landed in prison for various offenses, others just come and go without any significant achievement whatsoever. I cannot see any good reason why movie stars will still run in the future unless they are equipped with good educational background.

Manny Pacquiao who skyrocketed to celebrity status in a short period has the greatest surprise in his life, when a lady opponent in a congressional fight in Cotabato knocked him out to the floor. This is a painful lesson for Manny who thought being in the stardom is guarantee towards the legislative body. The blessing is he was lucky he did not win and therefore, would not be humiliated, laughed at or despised in congress.