



“The pen is mightier than the sword.”

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Manila Reporters in Shame

By: Ben Emata

Sixteen Manila reporters belonging to the Malacanang Press Club, who recently visited Cagayan de Oro to cover the arrival of the president during the launching of the Steag State Power's coal-fired plant, in Villanueva, Misamis Oriental, ended in exposing their corrupt practices that embarrassed the local media.

According to the Gold Star Daily, the president did not arrive due to bad weather but the Palace media that formed part of the advance party were already there.

These Manila journalists should have known better the proper practice of journalism especially in the observance of the code and ethics, they being practitioners in Malacanang. They have the best of credentials being press people in the executive department. They were supposed to be crème de la crème, the elite, the cream of the crop but they came out just the opposite. They miserably failed to display the appropriate structure of true journalism. This bunch of malpractitioners should be nailed in the hall of shame for their misbehavior.

When they asked for dinner from the public relation office of the provincial governor, that was proper and acceptable because they were visitors and naturally, they should be accommodated with utmost hospitality. It turned out, however, that the Steag Power Plant handled dinner for the visiting press. It is clear now that they actually needed cash. When they finally cancelled the dinner appointment and asked for pocket money instead “in exchange of good publicity”, that was outright corruption. It was a bold and



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specifically ugly approach that could be done only by people used to doing it.

I commend the staff of the capitol public relation office as well as the provincial governor for refusing to give any cash and for exposing such a disgraceful act.

I surmised the behavior of these journalists had exposed to extreme embarrassment every man and woman of the local media. I also suffered the bitter effect of that act because I always feel I am part of the Cagayan de Oro press.

President Arroyo should order an investigation of this mess and whoever made the demand, should be thrown out of the Malacanang premises. Or if someone in Malacanang, as a policy, maintains cash for the bad eggs in the press, in exchange for good publicity, he or she should also be kicked out to the lake. Credibility in the palace is at stake with this kind of media people preparing the publicity.

*This country should get rid of corruption. I don't care much though, if many government agencies are engaged in massive corruption, as long as the press remains generally clean, honest and prestigious. We must always be straightforward to maintain credibility and honor.
(BEN EMATA)*