

Double whammy for Ombudsman

Written by Editor-in-chief
Friday, 11 March 2011 18:24

TRUE ENOUGH, the House committee on justice found probable cause to impeach Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez for betrayal of public trust and overwhelmingly voted to send the complaint to the full House for a plenary vote.

The House, teeming with pro-impeachment members, is expected to endorse the complaint.

Thereafter, by law, the articles of impeachment will be transmitted to the Senate which will then constitute itself into an impeachment court presided by the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

After a trial, the Senate, ruled by the majority party, is also expected to vote in favor of impeachment, effectively removing the sitting Ombudsman from office.

Since it is conceded that the proceedings are political in nature, the ruling party, egged on by President Benigno Aquino III, can dispense with lengthy debates and presentation of evidence which are an integral part in a judicial process.

As in the House committee hearings, there will be an appearance of fair play and impartiality in the Senate trial, allowing the opposition to ventilate their positions.

But at the end of the day, it's a numbers game — her goose is cooked from the beginning.

In effect, this is a reversal of fortune.

Because of the same tyranny of numbers, two impeachment complaints against former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during her term never reached first base in the last

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Congress.

At least in this case, the Ombudsman was accorded every opportunity to confront her accusers and defend herself.

Instead, she went straight to the Supreme Court on a motion to reverse the latter's decision to stop the House committee from prosecuting her.

In a stinging rebuke, the High Court this week affirmed its decision, by a vote of 7-5-2, which stifled the Ombudsman's last-ditch effort.

The public will now count on the incoming Ombudsman to re-open the investigation of high-profile cases against the Arroyo family and other officials which Mrs. Gutierrez was accused of sitting on them for the last seven years.

Who killed Ensign Philip Escano in a Philippine Navy ship found to be carrying a huge cache of illegal drugs?

Who received hefty commissions from the aborted multi-million broadcast deal with Chinese company ZTE?

Who amassed huge kickbacks from the P728-million fertilizer fund scam?

Why did the principal accused Joc-joc Bolante go scotfree?

He even ran for governor of Capiz in the May 10 election.

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What about his boss, former Agriculture Secretary Cito Lorenzo, who fled the country and only re-appeared when President Aquino won?

What happened to the “Euro Generals” scandal?

Finally, under a zealous new Ombudsman, we hope the truth will out and the accused prosecuted to the hilt, without fear or favor.