

**\*\*Title:\*\* Foodsphere, Inc. vs. Atty. Melanio L. Mauricio, Jr.**

**\*\*Facts:\*\*** The case began when Alberto Cordero bought a can of CDO Liver Spread that was found to contain a colony of worms. A complaint was filed with the BFAD, which held a conciliation hearing where the Corderos demanded PHP 150,000 from Foodsphere, Inc., which the latter refused. Atty. Melanio Mauricio, representing the Corderos, threatened to publish damaging articles unless the demand was met. Despite Foodsphere's counter-offer and the eventual dismissal of the BFAD complaint following a settlement, Mauricio continued to malign Foodsphere in various media. Foodsphere filed criminal complaints for libel and threats to publish libel against Mauricio while he continued his tirade, even defying court orders restraining him from further publication. Foodsphere then filed a Verified Complaint for disbarment against Mauricio for grossly immoral conduct, violation of the lawyer's oath, and disrespect to the courts and investigating prosecutors before the IBP.

**\*\*Issues:\*\*** The Supreme Court tackled issues relating to Mauricio's conduct undermining public confidence in the legal profession, his violation of the lawyer's oath and ethical standards including disrespect towards the judiciary, and engaging in deceitful conduct.

**\*\*Court's Decision:\*\*** The Court ruled that Mauricio violated the Code of Professional Responsibility by engaging in deceitful conduct, making public statements in media about a pending case to influence public opinion, disrespecting court orders, and using offensive language. He was suspended from the practice of law for three years, with a warning of more severe consequences for similar future acts.

**\*\*Doctrine:\*\*** This case reiterates several doctrines related to the ethical standards of the legal profession, including the prohibition against engaging in unlawful, dishonest, immoral, or deceitful conduct (Rule 1.01 of the Code of Professional Responsibility); the mandate to uphold the integrity and dignity of the legal profession (Canon 7); and the lawyer's duty to refrain from making public statements that tend to influence the outcome of a pending case (Rule 13.02).

**\*\*Class Notes:\*\***

1. **\*\*Rule 1.01, Code of Professional Responsibility:\*\*** Lawyers must not engage in unlawful, dishonest, immoral, or deceitful conduct.
2. **\*\*Canon 7, Code of Professional Responsibility:\*\*** Lawyers must at all times uphold the integrity and dignity of the legal profession.
3. **\*\*Rule 13.02, Code of Professional Responsibility:\*\*** Lawyers shall not make public

statements about a pending case to influence public opinion.

4. **Rule 8.01, Code of Professional Responsibility:** Lawyers must avoid abusive, offensive, or otherwise improper language in their professional dealings.

**Historical Background:** This case underscores the tension between the legal profession's ethical standards and the powerful influence of mass media. It illustrates how the misuse of media by a legal professional to influence public opinion and disparage opponents can lead to disciplinary action, reinforcing the paramount importance of ethical conduct within the legal profession.