

ELECTORAL REFORMS – AN IMPERATIVE NECESSITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

(AN ABRIDGED POSITION PAPER OUT OF A RESEARCH MADE BY ROY
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ACCOUNTANCY WEEK ON JULY 18, 2007)

I. INTRODUCTION

A CENTURY AND NINE YEARS IS MORE THAN A LIFETIME EXCEPT, OF COURSE, FOR A FEW WHO, BY THE WILL OF GOD, WERE ALLOWED TO LIVE BEYOND THIS PERIOD. CERTAINLY, IT IS SO LONG ENOUGH TO HAVE A COUNTRY DEVELOP ITS SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING FOR THE PROSPERITY OF ITS PEOPLE.

109 YEARS IS THE AGE OF OUR INDEPENDENCE. IN TERMS OF THE PASSAGE OF TIME, THEREFORE, WE SHOULD HAVE LONG-ATTAINED OUR SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY. YET, WHEN COMPARED WITH OUR NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, WE HAVE NOT; THIS, NOTWITHSTANDING THE FACT THAT MANY OF THESE COUNTRIES, HAVE BEEN RAVAGED BY CIVIL WARS.

THUS, WE HAVE REASONS TO PAUSE IF ONLY TO ASK OURSELVES, WHERE DID WE GO WRONG AND WHY?

THIS HUMBLE REPRESENTATION HAS MADE A RESEARCH ON THIS AND FOUND OUT THAT, VERY SURPRISINGLY, THE SERIES OF SHORT QUESTIONS AND THE CORRESPONDING LITANY OF EQUALLY SHORT ANSWERS ARE JUST VERY SIMPLE. IN FACT, I REALIZED THAT THE PRODUCT OF THIS RESEARCH IS NOT NEW AFTERALL. IT HAS BEEN IN THE MINDS OF SO MANY OF US, OF PEOPLE ON THE STREETS, FISHERMEN,

FARMERS, BUSINESSMEN, PROFESSIONALS, AND EVEN INCLUDING THOSE BEHIND BARS. EACH ONE OF US, YOU AND I, THEREFORE, CAN RIGHTFULLY CLAIM THAT THIS IS THE PRODUCT OF OUR COLLECTIVE PAINSTAKING EFFORTS THAT HAVE BEEN THERE IN OUR MINDS THROUGH THE YEARS, NO MORE, NO LESS. I AM JUST AN ASSEMBLER OF THOSE THOUGHTS!

IT IS WORTH EMPHASIZING THAT THIS DISSERTATION INVOLVES POLITICS IN ITS STRUCTURAL DISCUSSION, YET IT IS NEVER MEANT TO BE PARTISAN.

IT IS NEVER INTENDED TO DEGRADE ANY ADMINISTRATION, PAST OR PRESENT, NEITHER IS IT INTENDED TO DEBASE ANY POLITICIAN OR POLITICAL PARTY BECAUSE THEY ARE THERE TO SERVE A GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM WHICH ALL OF US, FROM OUR FOREFATHERS DOWN TO THE PRESENT GENERATION, ARE RESPONSIBLE OF AND ACCOUNTABLE FOR.

WE HAVE A POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT IS IN PLACE. OUR ONLY PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE IS TO IMPROVE THE SYSTEM WHEN AND WHERE POSSIBLE.

THIS PAPER IS PRESENTED IN QUESTION-AND-ANSWER FORMAT FOR PURPOSES OF SIMPLICITY, CLARITY, BREVITY AND FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING. EVERYONE IS VERY SINCERELY ENCOURAGED TO OFFER ANY COMMENT OR COMMENTS FOR OR AGAINST THIS HUMBLE PIECE OF CONTRIBUTION. SINCE THIS IS OUR THOUGHTS LONG-HYBERNATING IN OUR MINDS, IT IS HOPED THAT THIS WILL INTEREST YOU IN NO SMALL MEASURE.

II. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION:

KNOWING THAT POVERTY BREEDS POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY, WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL ROOT CAUSE OF OUR COUNTY'S EXTREME POVERTY?

ANSWER:

GRAFT AND CORRUPTION ESPECIALLY IN THE CONDUCT OF OUR ELECTIONS.

QUESTION:

WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF GRAFT AND CORRUPTION?

ANSWER:

OUR METHOD OF ELECTING OUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

QUESTION:

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM OF OUR METHOD OF ELECTING OUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS?

ANSWER:

CAMPAIGNING DURING ELECTIONS IS TOO EXPENSIVE FOR CANDIDATES SO MUCH SO THAT THEY HAVE TO SPEND MILLIONS OF PESOS FOR A PUBLIC OFFICE THAT PAYS ONLY A VERY, VERY LOW SALARY.

QUESTION:

IS THERE A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF SUCH AN OFFICE AND THE APPROXIMATE AMOUNT OF ELECTION EXPENSES WHICH MAY HAVE TO BE INCURRED BY A CANDIDATE?

ANSWER:

FOR INSTANCE, A CANDIDATE FOR SENATOR IS ESTIMATED TO SPEND P30 MILLION AND UP IF ONLY TO BE ABLE TO WAGE A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AND INCREASE HIS/HER PROBABILITY OF WINNING. IN THIS YEAR'S ELECTION, A CANDIDATE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SPENT P209M AND STILL LOST IN THE ELECTION.

QUESTION:

LEGALLY, HOW MUCH IS A SENATORIAL CANDIDATE ALLOWED TO SPEND DURING ELECTION?

ANSWER:

A SENATORIAL CANDIDATE IS ALLOWED TO SPEND P3/PER REGISTERED VOTER. SINCE WE HAVE 45 MILLION REGISTERED VOTERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AS OF MAY 14, 2007, HE/SHE IS THEREFORE ALLOWED TO SPEND UP TO P135,000,000.

QUESTION:

HOW MUCH IS A MONTHLY SALARY OF A SENATOR?

ANSWER:

P35,000/MONTH OR P420,000/YR. OR P2,520,000/TERM OF 6 YEARS. EVEN IF WE DOUBLE THIS AMOUNT FOR HIS OTHER HONORARIA AS COMMITTEE CHAIR OF SOME SENATE COMMITTEES, THE AMOUNT OF P5,040,000 IS STILL WAY BELOW HIS EXPENSES DURING ELECTIONS.

QUESTION:

ARE CANDIDATES ALLOWED TO RECEIVE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC?

ANSWER:

YES, THEY ARE BUT THE PROBLEM WITH THIS PRACTICE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF PAY-BACK IN TERMS OF FAVORS ANY DONOR IS EXPECTED TO ASK FROM HIS/HER WINNING CANDIDATE.

QUESTION:

IF THIS IS THE CASE, WHY IS IT THAT SO MANY ARE INTERESTED TO RUN AND EVEN ENCOURAGE THEIR SPOUSES AND CHILDREN TO DO THE SAME?

ANSWER:

YOUR ANSWER IS AS GOOD AS MINE.

QUESTION:

SO WHAT ELECTORAL REFORMS, IF ANY, THAT WILL HAVE TO BE MADE?

ANSWERS:

1. THE CONSTITUTION SHALL HAVE TO BE AMENDED THROUGH “PEOPLE’S INITIATIVE” SUCH THAT THERE SHALL BE MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS OF CANDIDATES FOR ANY ELECTIVE POSITION.

2. CAMPAIGN EXPENSES WILL HAVE TO BE SHOULDERED BY THE GOVERNMENT

3. AMOUNT OF TAXES PAID IN RELATION TO HIS/HER NETWORTH MUST BE AMONG A CANDIDATE’S QUALIFICATIONS

4. SHORT-LISTING OF THE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES THROUGH RAFFLES

5. THE PRESIDENCY SHALL BE ROTATED AMONG REGIONS OF LUZON, VISAYAS AND MINDANAO TO ENSURE FAIR REPRESENTATION.

6. TO ELECT SENATORS BY REGION

7. ELECTIONS MUST BE AUTOMATED

QUESTION:

CAN THE GOVERNMENT AFFORD TO SHOULDER ALL ELECTION CAMPAIGN EXPENSES?

ANSWER:

YES, IT CAN VERY WELL AFFORD. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THE OVERALL CAMPAIGN EXPENSES FOR PRESIDENTIAL AND OTHER POSITIONS WILL ONLY BE P8,047,500,000. YEARLY BUDGETARY APPROPRIATION WILL THUS ONLY BE P2,682,500,000 (P8,047,500,000/3 YRS.) OR LESS AS ELECTION FOR PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT IS ONLY ONCE EVERY 6 YEARS. (COMPUTATIONS FOR THESE ARE IN SEPARATE SHEETS.)

QUESTION:

HOW WILL THE CAMPAIGN BE CONDUCTED?

ANSWERS:

FOR CAMPAIGN SORTIES, PLANES AND OTHER VEHICLES WILL HAVE TO BE CHARTERED?

COMMON POSTER AREAS TO BE ADOPTED.

TELEVISION, RADIO, NEWSPAPER AND OTHER ADS TO BE
ARRANGED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFICATION OF CANDIDATES WHO
ARE BUYING VOTES

QUESTION:

ANY OTHER PERCEIVED MAJOR ADVANTAGES AND
BENEFITS UNDER THIS SYSTEM?

ANSWERS:

POLITICAL DYNASTY WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE
ELIMINATED

NO MORE TRADITIONAL POLITICIANS AS SELECTION OF
CANDIDATES DONE BY RAFFLES

POLITICAL KILLINGS MINIMIZED

GRAFT AND CORRUPTION SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED

ECONOMY WILL EVENTUALLY IMPROVE

POLITICALLY STABILITY CAN BE ATTAINED ONCE EVERY FAMILY SHALL HAVE ENOUGH FOOD ON THE TABLE.

III. CONCLUSION

ARTICLE IX, SECTION 63 OF THE CONSTITUTION PROVIDES THAT THE REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES ARE ONLY THE FOLLOWING:

1. NATURAL BORN CITIZEN OF THE PHILIPPINES
2. A REGISTERED VOTER
3. ABLE TO READ AND WRITE
4. 40 YEARS OF AGE ON THE DAY OF THE ELECTION
5. RESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES FOR AT LEAST 10 YEARS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING SUCH ELECTION.

WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS, IT IS MUCH HARDER TO APPLY AND BE ACCEPTED AS A SUPERVISOR OF A MINI-MART.

OUR CONSTITUTION ALSO PROVIDES IN SECTION 26 OF ARTICLE II AS FOLLOWS:

. . . POLITICAL DYNASTY IS PROHIBITED “AS DEFINED BY LAW.” (EMPHASIS SUPPLIED). THE PROBLEM IS OUR LAWMAKERS NEVER ENTERTAINED AN ENABLING LAW FILED BY SOME WELL-MEANING LEGISLATORS TO DEFINE WHAT POLITICAL DYNASTY SHOULD EMBRACE. WE CAN ONLY SURMISE WITH CERTAIN DEGREE OF ACCURACY THAT IT WAS NEVER PASSED BECAUSE IT WILL RUN COUNTER TO THEIR

OBJECTIVES OF MAKING THEIR SPOUSES, CHILDREN AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILY FREE TO INHERIT THEIR POSITIONS OR HOLD SIMULTANEOUSLY OTHER ELECTIVE AND APPOINTIVE POWERFUL POSTS IN GOVERNMENT.

WE ARE NOW AT THE CROSSROAD OF OUR NATION'S HISTORY. THERE SEEMS TO BE ONLY TWO CHOICES: GALVANIZE OUR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE SYSTEM THROUGH PEACEFUL AND LEGAL MEANS AS SUGGESTED IN THE FOREGOING, OR JUST STAY ASIDE AND CONTINUE TO WATCH THE MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE GO HUNGRY AND ANGRY, UNDER THE CONDITION OF EXTREME POVERTY, BEDEVILED BY GRAFT AND CORRUPTION AND HAUNTED BY FRAUDS DURING ELECTIONS.

WELL, ANYWAY, WE ARE NOT LABELED AS THE "MOST CORRUPT IN ASIA" FOR NOTHING.

BY THE WAY, I WILL BE WILLING TO SPEAK IN ANY FORUM IF GIVEN THE CHANCE TO ELA