



Razor's Edge

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"Bear in mind that oppression reigns supreme when citizens succumb to intimidation and tyranny.... "

Automation Of RP Voting System Stalled

NEW YORK, N.Y. Jan. 08 (PinoyGlobal) - Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." His bold conviction gave birth to the Civil Rights Movement of the 60s that made equal rights for all Americans possible: since then civil rights ceased to be a myth but something tangible for all ethnic groups in America.

That is what makes America great - the government listens to the people and is not impervious but amenable to reforms. Its Constitution has been amended 27 times not for the expediencies of any political party but for valid reasons. In contrast, the Arroyo administration undermines popular will with brazen audacity - in the process making a monkey of term limits. And it goes as far as corrupting the military to coerce the electorate for the president's political advantage.

With the incubus of being jailed for libel, salvaged through extra-judicial killings by the military and police dogs under the payroll of Malacanang and political dynasties, Filipinos live in constant fear in the motherland. Thus only a few muster the courage to denounce arrogance of power and corruption in the Arroyo administration. No one can long endure the cruelty and deprivations citizens have suffered since the incipience of democracy in our country in 1945 when Uncle Sam gave us independence.

It is time our people solve their own problems, nobody will do it for them. It can be done with the electorate flexing its muscles in the polls, defy frauds and resist prostituting their ballots. Only in so doing will they ever break

the chain-and-ball that has weighed them down for decades. Elections are just around the corner, the people can remove GMA's oppressive rule by simply electing deserving candidates not traditional politicians inured to corruption and who have no concept for constitutional process except when it protects their vested and selfish political agendas. Juan de la Cruz must fight tooth and nail the protracted Constituent Assembly (Con-ass) to amend the Constitution remembering that Pres. Arroyo parented disunity among our people because of her insatiable desire for power. It just took Edsa Dos to ignite it, now she is unstoppable.

Electoral reforms are necessary in light of the antiquated tally system being used by the Commission on Elections. Oddly enough the Comlec is taking its sweet time to send Congress its supplemental budget that will finance automation of elections. Is the Comelec hanging on to that Jurassic system because someone powerful has ordered it? Cleisthenes himself who invented democracy 5 hundred years B.C. would discard the vote counting system in favor of smoke-signals.

Our electoral system has to be drastically overhauled within the short time left to 2010, or the Palace will have a valid excuse postponing the elections or proceed under the old system where vote shaving, frauds, ballot box snatching and padding is a piece of cake for Malacanang, the "Hello, Garci" way.

The system comes up with election results months afterwards. The interim is crucial because a desperate president could subvert the will of the electorate no matter the cost in lives and money. The void is cue for Nintendo time

where the birds, beasts, trees and the dead vote for the administration lineup and the president. And that would be a disaster!

In a country governed by retributive justice, fear of criminal libel, extra-judicial killings of journalists, radicals and opposition candidates, deter the people from summoning their courage to defy wicked governance. As a constitutional body independent of the president, the Commission on Elections can reverse all that by modernizing the system. The citizens should ask the Comelec to provide Congress at once its supplemental budget Senator Dick Gordon has been asking.

Just because life is a constant struggle, the hardships of others cease to be of interest, this is not true with me. In this wise my columns tried their level best to champion government transparency aware that it has bred contempt for justice and human life. I hope that my modest efforts will spark in our people's hearts to emulate Martin Luther King Jr. who led his people to the "Promised Land", which to Filipinos is untrammelled freedom.

In Philippine politics, nobody wants to be the king or queen of nice. The people could not depend the president or her political cronies to take the cudgels for our groveling nation. They have to fend for themselves. Choosing complacency is romancing oppression. They have to assert themselves or live perpetually hostage to a government that has failed to manifest respect for civil rights.

Do I feel bold because I am in the citadel of liberty (America) away from the bully tactics of the powers-that-be that I do what our defenseless people back home are incapable of doing? Yes. But my track record also shows that even at the height of the rule of the late Dictator Marcos I did the same without expecting to see the Philippines liberated from his murderous minions in uniform. Sure I was treated as a social outcast by the hypocrites around him but the price of liberty was worth it.

Reforming the government is actually within people's power. The common man can demand the Commission on Elections to modernize the system

immediately. The Comelec must jettison the antiquated system of pens, pencils and papers that voters have been using since the birth of Philippine democracy. The system is antediluvian!

Sen. Gordon who initiated the law that will make elections automated is frantically asking for the commission's "supplemental budget" as soon as possible. The budget in question has understandably been reduced to P 21-billion, so be it. But even that is not visible in the radar of Congress. What is holding Chairman Jose Melo from sending that infernal supplemental budget to the legislature boggles comprehension. Is he under orders to procrastinate forwarding it for Malacanang to justify postponing the elections? Or exploit the delay so Comelec could operate under the old system, which will enable administration candidates to commit the usual "bawas dagdag" in polling places as feared by political pundits back home? Either reason is unacceptable.

Gordon eloquently articulated the significance for an automated system, which he says will "elevate the country's electoral exercise from third to first world class but also erase public suspicion that the Filipino people's sacrosanct votes would be stolen from them."

What are you waiting for Mr. Melo, do or do not, there is no try, send the budget to Congress now that the momentum is still sizzling. Nobody will blame you if something goes wrong, i.e. having 2010's elections postponed. Remember martial law has been ruled out completely but the Charter change roars in the sidelines, which is martial law euphemized.

In the bumpy road of crisis, the country experiences economic storms. Unfortunately, the crisis is self-inflicted by the government's corruption. So, why should the people be punished with poverty and hunger? That is why elections are indispensable come 2010.

Dear readers, defy the rule of cynicism with bulldog tenacity. Bear in mind that oppression reigns supreme when citizens succumb to intimidation and tyranny, and that is just existing like wild animals domesticated by the unbridled powers of the master, not living. #