



'Politicians' capture'

SKETCHES By Ana Marie Pamintuan (The Philippine Star) | Updated February 11, 2013 - 12:00am

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There they go... the candidates for the Senate, officially kicking off tomorrow the three-month campaign.

That's 90 days to cover 80 provinces. In our archipelago of 7,100 islands, the travel logistics can be a nightmare. It's easier to reach voters through mass media, but the cost can be a nightmare for candidates with limited means who still have to work on name recall.

Last week I asked some of the candidates how much their budget was for the campaign. No one would quote a figure.

Instead they told me the cost of airtime on the major TV-radio networks: P400,000 to P480,000 per minute. The Commission on Elections (Comelec) has limited each candidate to 120 minutes of TV advertising and 180 minutes for radio.

This means that for broadcast advertising alone, a candidate for the Senate who wants to maximize the allotted ad time needs from P120 million to P144 million. This is apart from the cost of traveling from Batanes in the north to Bongao in the western tip and Balabac and Sarangani in the south for face-to-face campaigning.

Under Comelec rules, each party-affiliated candidate for national office can spend no more than P3 per voter plus P5 from the party. Independent candidates are allowed to spend up to P5 per voter. With 52 million registered voters, that means a maximum spending budget of P260 million for independent bets and up to P416 million for party-affiliated candidates.

▶ For those belonging to a major party, money is saved through common or group ads. So if the required funding is P144 million, each candidate may need to contribute only about P10 million.

Major political parties raise funds for the group while individual candidates also have their own donors. What about those with limited means? Teddy Casiño of Makabayan, a coalition of party-list organizations, is relying on the groups' grassroots network for fund-raising. He is also selling teddy bears for P200 each.

I asked another candidate where he thought Casiño would get campaign funds. The quick reply: from "permit-to-campaign fees" extorted by the communist New People's Army from candidates.

Casiño, who wants to move to the Senate after "graduating" from the House of Representatives, is identified with the radical left. He said his teddy bears are blue, not red, although the toys have red hearts. He will be fielding questions about his leftist ideas in his campaign.

Last Friday I asked another Senate bet, veteran politician Ernesto Maceda, how the enormous amount of money spent in a campaign can be recovered by both the donor and candidate in case of victory.

Maceda gave me a realistic answer: campaign donors get a return on their investment through contracts and other favors from the winning candidate.

What about the candidates themselves? How do they recover their own investment? There wasn't enough time to probe Maceda on this. But if a candidate spends P10 million of his own for his campaign, an annual Christmas gift of P1.6 million from the office of the Senate president, courtesy of Juan de la Cruz, is one way of recouping some of the investment.

I asked Aurora Rep. Juan Edgardo "Sonny" Angara, who is seeking to take over the Senate seat to be vacated by his dad Edgardo, the same question: how does one recoup campaign expenses? The younger Angara gave me a lawyer's answer: who said campaign investment has to be recovered? Who said a campaign donation is a debt that must be repaid?

"Not everyone will call it a favor. There really are people who believe it is their duty to support honest politicians," Sonny told me.

* * *

The nation actually saw such people in election campaigns during the Marcos dictatorship, and surely we still have such people, rich and poor alike, in this country.

Before you cynics roll up your eyes, listen to Sonny's dad, Sen. Edgardo Angara, who chaired the 5th International Conference of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption in Manila hosted by the Senate over a week ago.

Angara the elder called my attention to a point made by one of the speakers at the conference, Huguette Labelle, the Canadian chair of Transparency International. Angara recalled Labelle warning the hundreds of participants from around the globe to "watch out for politicians' capture."

Labelle wasn't referring, of course, to the arrest of politicians, which many Filipinos would relish seeing, but to the political version of regulatory capture – that situation where the regulated controls the regulator through corruption.

"You can regulate political behavior by regulating campaign contributions," Angara told me.

That's an acknowledgment that campaign donors do get a return on investment.

Angara noted that even in the United States, lawmaking is controlled by vested interests. But he acknowledged, as I pointed out, that those vested interests in the US are known to the American public, because of transparency rules in campaign finance, and because legislative lobbying is an open and government-regulated industry in the United States.

Revenue authorities can also look without difficulty into any bank account in the US. Even if caps on individual campaign contributions were lifted two years ago in the US, there's still a money trail that can be scrutinized for possible wrongdoing.

* * *

So how does one discourage politicians' capture? Repaying any form of debt involves a code of honor that runs deep in Philippine society. But repaying campaign debts can be the root of many corrupt deals during a winning candidate's stay in public office.

The Angaras have a suggestion: why not require all campaign contributions to be coursed through a political party rather than given directly to individual candidates? That way, it is the party that is indebted to the donor, and the candidate feels no personal obligation to repay donations with favors.

I can see this suggestion being killed by politicians who don't need a party to raise campaign funds, and who are perfectly happy to pocket everything they receive.

These are typically the same candidates who, if they win, are ready to repay campaign contributions with the spoils of victory.

When Huguette Labelle spoke about politicians' capture, I'm sure most of the Filipino politicians in the audience wore earplugs or fell asleep.

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[gusto ko yung suggestion nila](#)

gusto ko yung suggestion nila na if may contributions dapat diretso nalang sa party , Maganda nga yung idea na yan senador Angara

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[" why not require all](#)

" why not require all campaign contributions to be coursed through a political party rather than given directly to individual candidates? " oo nga nman.

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[why not require all and my reply, ladybalmaceda...](#)

that is one good idea, but there should also be direct contribution to individual candidates, but must be accounted for and here is the very good suggestion as what Huguette Labelle would like to convey...this is just a suggestion but as Labelle must have experienced this process just been proven to be very effective... before a candidate is approve to run, he must appoint a Treasurer to keep all the records of Contributions and Expenses of his Campaign and must be sworn by the responsible Election Returning Officer assigned to the particular jurisdiction...That is Mandatory...and that Treasurer must be Familiar with NUTS and Bolts of contributions guidelines and campaign expenses and must report the records at a specified time after the campaign or well, there is a sanctioned for failures to comply...as all of these treaurers pointed or picked by candidates are volunteers or Party Associates, they usually would not shame themselves or risk their personal career or jail time for any other reason...this must be considered for transparency and accountability...through the efforts of our NGOs helping other countries reforming their Electoral process especially those in the Carribean nation, theirs are now some of the cleanest and fair elections..Comelec should also listen to those who are in the lead...when it comes to the cleanest, safest, and most transparent election, Hugguete Labelle country and his province is on the Top...That I can Testify...i am his country man.

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[Ms Pamintuan, Mr Labelle of Transparency International must be](#)

Referring to the Campaign Distribution of our Election Campaign here in Canada which I have been posting in my comments often...and here once again I will give the summary of how transparent and effective the Control... Campaign and Political Contribution is on ONGOING and not only on time of election...Every year, contributions to political parties, nomination of candidates (if election is called) leadership election by party membership or just for General Party fund is limited to a

specific amount for every Citizen with a very clear defined guidelines and must be RECEIPTED if the amount in excess of \$20...and every year during filing of Tax Returns, contributors may file their contribution for Tax Refunds or tax reduction of up to 75 % to a certain amount...a MAX is Strictly enforced by the Election Commissioner and is responsible for the enforcement as authorized by the Election Canada Chief...Party and candidates campaign expenses are also refunded by the Revenue Canada as per guideline...and that refunds will go to the Party general funds for whatever expense the party may need, including its General expense...Campaign Contribution will only Come from Citizens and any other Contribution from any source is ILLEGAL...Candidate can not contribute or spend more than any other citizen for their annual allowable contribution...violation of the rules could be punished by forfeiting the right to run for elected office or imprisonment under the crimiinal code. that is the reason why anyone, even students or single moms or the unemployed can run for the members of Parliament...Last election, few fresh high school graduates and single moms won seats under the New Democrats (Socialist Party) which stole the opposition from the Liberals...(we do not have restriction and who can run if the party picks them up...the simple rule is if you can vote, you can run...and actually it is much better since one can only vote in a riding or district of his residence, but one can run in Any riding and there are 308 ridings or seats to run in the Feds) and at 18 on election day, one can become an MP or PM..

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[And further Ms Pamintuan,Huguette Labelle must have experienced](#)

During the years when Contributions from Businesses and from Labour Unions were allowed in Canada and that too resulted in Influence Peddling that may had something to do with one of the big corruption Scandal known as the Sponsorship Scandal in Quebec..that after the Judicial Inquiry, one of the Inquiry recommendations is to Eleminate all Politcal campaign contribution from businesses, labour union, lobbyist but only from individual with Strick limits and Tax Refundable to encourage Citizens to participate in the Process...(whether one will contribute or not, his tax will be used to refund those who contributed)...and if you think that the loopholes like giving the money to relatives or friends to contribute if one already exceeded his maximum limit is easy, few already Tried and Regretted the act...they were shamed as they were caught as easy as one would think...just how did they do it? the question one should ask...why made up some rules if one can not enforce it?

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Nakakatuwa ka naman mom. Matagal na sila nangangampanya.

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