

March 16, 2010 - Suggested ads for Filipino presidential candidates



If you like this post, please **subscribe to the RSS feed**. *N.B. ? This was published in Asian Correspondent (March 15, 12:40 p.m.) where I write a weekly column (Philippine Fantasy).* In less than two months, Filipino voters like me will choose the next local and national leaders of the country.

The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) official website still lists 10 presidential candidates even if it has already disqualified Vetellano Acosta of Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (loose translation: New Society Movement). Anyway, that there are currently **nine** candidates for President doesn't necessarily translate to a variety of choices.

They are more of the same not only in terms of their social background but also where they stand on burning issues of the day. How could voters choose wisely if they don't know their platform of governance? Campaign slogans and jingles cannot be expected to provide an in-depth explanation of specific programs and policies that presidential candidates would implement if they get elected.

The discerning voters do not need catchy slogans or expensive production numbers as they read, watch or listen to political advertisements. All that's required is a categorical statement regarding burning issues of the day.

In a recent column article published in *Pinoy Weekly* titled "Sino ba'ng dapat iboto?" (loose translation: Who should be deserving of our vote?), I wrote about the state of my "political indecision" due to the lack of in-depth discussion of issues.

In the process of my discussion, I presented some alternative short statements that could serve as 30-second ads for the presidential candidates. Allow me at this point to translate them into English:

- I will repeal the Oil Deregulation Law because we need to end the monopoly of the oil companies.
- The Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) does not serve the interest of the majority of Filipinos so it is right that we junk it, along with the other US-RP military agreements.

- I will support the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB) because this follows the land-to-the-tiller principle absent in the recently extended Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and other past agrarian reform programs.
- I will increase the salaries of workers in the private and public sectors so I will encourage the Senate and the House of Representatives to pass the pending bills regarding legislated wage increases.
- I will fight the globalization policy which results not just in the increase in the prices of goods and services but also in the death of many local businesses.

Of course, it's possible to think of so many more.

- Just like the Oil Deregulation Law, the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) should be repealed because this has resulted in anomalous increases in the electric bill.
- The privatization of water utilities has resulted in increases in the water bill so it is necessary for government to regain control of all water utilities, as in the case of the power and oil industries that must be similarly nationalized.
- The poor people always bear the brunt of indirect taxes on goods and services so the repeal of the Value-Added Tax is in order.
- The police will not violently disperse any peaceful mass actions and, on certain occasions, protesters in Mendiola will even be allowed to enter Malacanang Palace for dialogue.
- Consistent with the findings of the United Nations and other international groups, I hold the military directly responsible for the spate of extra-judicial killings and other forms of human rights violations and those concerned should be ready to face criminal charges.

Obviously, these statements take less than 30 seconds to deliver. But given the lack of political will of many candidates, it might take them forever to do so.

Once they commit to upholding such issues, they will definitely end up betraying the social class they belong to, not to mention alienating the moneyed few who help fund their campaigns. Does this mean that in-depth discussion of issues will

remain a pipe dream in the runup to the May 10 elections?

At any rate, if there are any presidential candidates who are willing to incorporate these points in future political advertisements, they will definitely help raise the level of political discourse and earn the votes of the more critical Filipinos.