

Written by Bobby Reyes

Saturday, 06 December 2008 02:16 - Last Updated Saturday, 06 December 2008 04:16

Part Two of [Kissing Babies, Instead of Kissing Asses](#)

There is an alleged plot to oust House Speaker Prospero Nograles for endorsing a Constitutional Convention (**Con-Con**). He clarified, however, that a Constitutional Assembly (**Con-Ass**) remains the first option in the House of Representatives to pursue charter change (**cha-cha**).

Speaker Nograles, who was my former classmate at the Ateneo de Manila College of Law (Class of 1970), should have used more politically-correct terms than “Con-Con” or “Con-Ass.” Why?

“Con” is often the shorter term for “convict.” As “Con-Con” may be mistaken for “two convicts.” “Con-Ass” is a far-worse term. Why, again?

Editor’s Note: To read the first article of this occasional series, please click on this link:

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[Kissing Babies, Instead of Kissing Asses \(Part One\)](#)

Because in reality (according to an anonymous author), “Life is all about ass. People are either covering it, laughing it off, kicking it, kissing it, busting it, trying to get a piece of it, behaving like one; or worse, you live with one.”

I have written also on several occasions the exceptionally-brilliant advice of Enrique Zobel, then the Ayala Corporation chairman. Mr. Zobel, before he met what eventually became a fatal accident in a polo game, advised the employees of an Ayala subsidiary in Kalimantan, Indonesia, not to assume anything. He said that: “The problem with the word ‘ASSUME’ is that it makes an ASS out of U and ME.”

If I were Speaker Nograles’ speech writer or his public-relations director, I would suggest to him respectfully to use the following terms in their entirety: “Constitutional Convention, Constitutional Assembly and Charter Change.”

By the way, “Cha-Cha” is not also a good term to use. People in Sorsogon, Masbate and the Samar Provinces would rather use the term, “Tango.” It is short for “tangolong,” which is their term for the verb, “to slap.” Yes, “Cha-cha” – to prolong the rule of the lame-duck President – is like a slap on the face of the people.

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And finally, it may be best for Speaker Nograles to just practice the art of kissing babies, as done most-effectively by professional politicians.

The news article about Speaker Nograles can be accessed in its entirety in this hyperlink:

[Con-Ass still first option--Nograles](#)

Here are the excerpts:

QUOTE.

Amid rumors of an alleged plot to oust him for endorsing Constitutional Convention (Con-Con), House Speaker Prospero Nograles on Friday clarified that Constitutional Assembly (Con-Ass) remains the first option in the lower House to pursue charter change (cha-cha).

“I've not withdrawn my signature on that resolution in favor of Con-Ass proposals now pending in the House committee on constitutional amendments. I did not endorse Con-con. My position is that any mode is okay as long as it will realize constitutional reforms,” he said.

Why Speaker Nograles Should Avoid the Term “Con-Ass” and Just Practice the Art of Kissing Babies - Ma

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Nograles issued a press statement on Thursday welcoming calls by various sectors to change the Constitution through a Constitutional Convention (Con-Con), whose members can be elected in 2010. In Con-Ass, incumbent senators and congressmen will make the amendments.

“The mode through which reforms can be instituted is just secondary concern. Any mode is okay as long as it will correct the Constitution’s highly-restrictive economic provisions. What matters most is to hasten reforms so that this country can move on and fast,” he said.

“Con-Con is the next best option as this will break the stalemate with the Senate which is for Con-Con. I’m committed to cha-cha but I don’t want to make the same mistakes of the past. If we dance the cha-cha, we should do it right, and for the right reasons,” Nograles added.

(Snipped).

A day after Nograles’s statement approving Con-Con, text messages circulated regarding moves by the pro-Con-Ass congressmen to oust him. If Villafuerte is to be believed, he has 167

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signatures supporting his resolution.

Nograles shrugged off the oust rumors.

“There is no need for that (ouster plot). It's just a simple numbers game. My leadership position is at the pleasure of the majority, and I'm ready to go when the majority says so. I have no illusions about it, and my cards are always on the table without any hidden agenda,” Nograles said.

Nograles was elected House Speaker in February, after the ouster of long-running, administration-ally-turned-critic Pangasinan Rep. Jose De Venecia Jr.. De Venecia was ousted by the allies of President Arroyo, who lost confidence in De Venecia when his son, Joey, testified on First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo's alleged involvement in the controversial National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China's ZTE Corp.

Bypassing the Senate?

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The insistent moves of administration allies in the House of Representatives have sparked tension between the two legislative chambers. Senators are generally for Con-Con, which they said should be done after President Arroyo’s term in 2010. The Senate’s position is supported by various sectors, including the influential Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

In a move that will effectively bypass the Senate, Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte, president of President Arroyo's party, Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (KAMPI), is gathering signatures for a yet-to-be-filed resolution that will call for the convening of a Constituent Assembly through a joint voting.

A three-fourth vote of Congress—or 196 votes—is required to convene itself into a Constituent Assembly. In separate voting, that means 179 congressmen and 18 senators should approve. Assuming joint voting is constitutional, the 238-member House of Representatives can gather the necessary votes without the approval of a single senator.

There is strong opposition among public and private sector groups against Con-Ass. Seen as a vehicle to extend President Arroyo’s term, civil society groups, influential businessmen and opposition leaders will gather in Makati City on December 12 in protest of the move.

Supreme Court the real battleground

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Nograles himself acknowledged that only the Supreme Court will be able to resolve the tension over the congressmen’s proposal to conduct joint voting.

The congressmen’s position for joint voting is expected to be challenged in the Supreme Court once the administration allies in the House of Representatives gather the 196 signatures and make the move to convene into a Constituent Assembly.

“All modes at this point is a possibility, but what we really need now is the sense of the Supreme Court,” Nograles said.

“If the Supreme Court says that the determination of Con-Ass can be voted jointly by the Senate and House, we can go for it. But if it says otherwise and maintains that this should be voted separately, then we can go for Concon,” he added.

Congressmen quick to back Nograles

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Meantime, several congressmen were quick to reject any ouster move against Nograles.

"I go with the Speaker," said Parañaque Rep. Eduardo Zialcita.

Baguio City Rep. Mauricio Domogan also warned of the dire consequences of ousting Nograles. "It will only promote disunity and chaos, gulo lang yan. It won't do the House any good," he said.

Others who rejected the rumored ouster moves are Camiguin Rep. Pedro Romualdo, Zamboanga del Sur Rep. Antonio Cerilles, Tarlac Rep. Jeci Lopus, and Malabon City-Navotas Rep. Alvin Sandoval.

Other congressmen also supported Nograles's welcoming Constitutional Convention.

"Our intention is to amend the economic provision so the only way we can do it is through Con-Con. I am in support of the Speaker," said Camiguin Rep. Pedro Romualdo.

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“To do Cha-cha, we need a partner, which is the Senate. We should not fault or begrudge the Speaker because his intention is good, which is to improve the restrictive economic provisions of the Constitution to lure more investors and propel development in our country especially during the global recession,” Cerilles added.

"Why should we go through this acrimonious exercise if the Senate will not go with us? What I'm saying is, elect the delegates to the Con-Con after the election. I am with the Speaker 100 percent," Zialcita also said.

Other congressmen who welcomed Constitutional Convention are Buhay Rep. Irwin Tieng, Camarines Norte Rep. Liwayway Vinzons-Chato, Quezon Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III, Agap Rep. Nicanor Briones.

(Snipped)

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