

JGL Eye Column

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Will Sorsogon Voters Recall Gov. Raul Lee?

C HICAGO (*jGLi*) – When I was covering the mayor's offices of Rizal province in the Philippines in the seventies, I was pleasantly surprised to see a mayor of Antipolo in near tears when I told him politicians should pave the way for other aspirants when they had grown tired of their jobs or had run out of ideas to improve other peoples' lives.

“Joseph,” the mayor told me, “what will happen to me when I leave the town hall? Running for mayor and winning the job is the be-all and end-all for me.

I don't have any other marketable skills to boot."

If you get a similar response from politicians in your neighborhood, you should be ready to stick by him for a long haul.

These kinds of politicians might not have heard of the Peter Principle propounded in 1968 by educator Dr. Laurence J. Peter, who said that: "In a hierarchy, every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence ... in time every post tends to be occupied by an employee who is incompetent to carry out its duties ... Work is accomplished by those employees who have not yet reached their level of incompetence."

This theory met its match when the United States Military has required that certain ranks should be held for no longer than a set amount of time, a lack of compliance of which could render grounds for dismissal.

We can just imagine if the Philippine military will ignore the Peter Principle. What would have happened to the Philippines if thefts of comptrollers of the Philippine Armed Forces like Generals Carlos Garcia and Jacinto Ligot or

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Chiefs of Staff like the suicide-driven Angelo Reyes, Diomedio Villanueva and Roy Cimatú were not exposed? Don't you think they would ever leave their posts if they were not detected?

And if these kinds of generals were given the option to retire from office like a United States Supreme Court justice who has lifetime tenure, where will the Philippine government get its depleted funds?

LESSONS FROM GENERALS

Look at what happened to other military officers abroad, whose rise to power had remained unchecked. There were Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Augusto Pinochet or Col. Muammar Muhammad al-Gaddafi to name few, who are shoo-in for entries into the Hall of Shame.

And this takes us back to our local politicians, like my favorite provincial governor in Sorsogon, Atty. Raul Lee.

Governor Lee is your typical Filipino politician, who believes that, like the mayor of Antipolo, Rizal, or the Hall-of-Shame generals that they are the only competent people who can improve other peoples' lives.

If Governor Lee will be voted off, he can no longer game the system. His position will be a fair game to all comers, who believe that he no longer have an iota of competence.

Ever since his political rival in Governor Juan Frivaldo died after becoming the longest-serving Sorsogon provincial governor, Governor Lee seemed to have carried a chip on his shoulder because he could no longer break Mr. Frivaldo's winning streak.

With term limits now in place, like any other politician protecting his turf, when Governor Lee will just about to be termed out, he will let his wife, Sally, run for his position so he will not lose his touch of power. And he can run again for the same position in case his wife is also about to be termed out.

But if they have outlived their competence, as they never age like wine, I believe, Governor Lee should just cede his position to his vice governor and “cut his losses.”

POLITICAL DYNASTY IN THE MAKING

Instead of enjoying his retirement, the 69-year-old Mr. Lee is now re-enforcing his mini-dynasty that he would only be dreaming if the aging “Tata Juan” were still alive. He is now grooming his son, the incumbent Sorsogon City Vice Mayor, and his grandson, the incumbent SK Federation President, for his position.

I don't mind if his dynasty takes root for as long as can improve the peoples' lives till Kingdom Come.

But why is he now so insecure like Marcos? Governor Lee has also now usurped the power of the provincial legislature called Sangguniang

Panlalawigan by reducing its budget?

The last I heard, in order to silence his critics, Governor Lee has also taken over the appointing power of his vice governor (Antonio H. Escudero) and suddenly became a micro-manager.

After being named to answer for the fertilizer scam, Mr. Lee turned the table on his opponents in the Sangguniang Panlalawigan by hitting them where it hurts most: deprive the SP the ability to hire and keep their own staff.

All appointments by the SP will now have to go thru the eye of his needle so he can buy their loyalties.

His vocal critique, SP member Vladimir Frivaldo, the grandson of "Tata Juan," was deprived of his "proposed staff complement" after Governor Lee learned that the grandson of his former foe was opposing Lee's support for STL

(small town lottery) operation, the controversial operation of mining in Barangays Balocaue and Cabagahan both in Matnog, Sorsogon, and

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demand for liquidation of the loan obtained by his wife, Sally Lee, in the amount of 260-M pesos (U.S.\$ 5.7-Millions) before Lee can obtain a new 350-million pesos (U.S \$8.75-M), the biggest loan in the history of the province.

Vladimir Frivaldo reminded Gov Lee that it is the duty of the SP to approve the annual budgets, the request by the office of the Governor to obtain loan, to oversee that programs and projects are implemented properly within existing laws, guidelines and procedures and make implementors accountable, and not the governor's.

I don't know how Gov. Lee can circumvent the fertilizer scam filed against him before the Office of the Ombudsman. If he can steer clear of the charges, the people of Sorsogon can always gather enough signatures to start the ball rolling for his unprecedented recall. # # #

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