

Headline: Focus on political principles, not on personalities

Byline: Philippine Daily Inquirer

Published Date: 01:32 AM May 08, 2014

Section: opinion

Word Count: 3028

Content:

Maybe instead of conducting surveys on the “winnability” of prospective presidential candidates, survey institutes should focus on issues like employment generation, energy, climate change and poverty alleviation. As far as the latest survey shows, the same names have propped up—no surprise there, for not much has changed in the country’s politics. But maybe we should examine the very principles that define us as one nation—equality, justice and the common good—which tell us that above the personal and eternal ambition of any one man, we are a country in which 40 percent of the population, or around 40 million people, look to a future that is uncertain due to the country’s unchanging and decrepit political landscape.

The electorate has been so conditioned to choose the “right” man, but not to see politics as not all that. It is about how the basic structure—that social arrangement based on the consent of the governed—is supposed to serve the interest of each on the basis of principles that are agreed on, which include, among others, respect for the basic dignity of each, the equitable distribution of social goods, fair opportunities for all and, more importantly, the promotion and protection of human rights.

It does not help that the most learned commentators “analyze” mostly only the qualities of potential presidential candidates; elections should never be about them.

The main concern of elections is the future of our children. And we have to realize that even if we put car racer Sebastian Vettel in the driver’s seat, if the car he is driving has mechanical problems, he will not be able to use to the fullest extent his God-given talents. We have plenty of talented men but they refuse to enter government because of the perception that government is nothing more than a mafia organization.

For instance, in choosing somebody for a job, including Cabinet positions, those in power base their appointments on a minimum of qualifications. In the best-run private firms, bosses get to choose the best from among the best of applicants. To add insult to injury, some appointing authorities do not look at the competencies of appointees; all they consider is political convenience. This explains why our basic structure has failed most of our people.

We cannot forever blame the poor Filipino for being lazy, or for being not reflective in his judgments. We have to put the burden on those who are in power. President Aquino has emphasized on the fact that the former president abused her position. But, well, with all these brownouts and lack of apparent foresight, our sitting President seems to be remiss in his job, and that he has not been able to fully use his power to alleviate if not free our people from the bondage of misery and a less-than-human life.

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