



CenPEG Reply to Philippine Star Columnists

March 8, 2011

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Letter to the Editor
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Dear Editors,

We refer to the column "Back to 'dagdag bawas' polls?" by Ms. Mary Ann Ll. Reyes (Hidden Agenda, Philippine Star, Feb. 23, 2011), and that of Mr. Babes Romualdez (Spy Bits, Philippine Star, Feb. 24, 2011).

For the information of the two columnists, the Center for People Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG) is a UP-based policy study center composed of academic scholars, professionals and luminaries in various fields, conducting studies on issues of public interest based on scientific research. National Artist for Literature, Bienvenido Lumbera, is its current Board chair.

The Automated Election System Watch (AES Watch), on the other hand, is a citizens' election watchdog composed of 45 organizations who have banded together to speak as one on the automated elections. Their studies on automated elections are based on facts from which conclusions are drawn. Its first spokesperson, Alfredo Pascual, is the new President of the University of the Philippines. One of its co-conveners, Mother Superior Mary John Mananzan, has been named one of the top 100 inspiring people in the world (Women Deliver 100 list) including U.S. State Secretary Hilary Clinton.

We're surprised that Ms. Reyes, in particular, mentions CenPEG as "unheard of" when the Star has published several news reports about it while some of the daily's columnists have also taken up the issues raised by CenPEG and AES Watch. CenPEG's various researches and analyses, including its 640-page report on the automated election system, are posted for public transparency on its two websites (www.eu-cenpeg.com and www.cenpeg.org) and are thus easily accessible to journalists, policy makers, and other Filipinos. Some of its publications have been acknowledged as centennial publications by the University of the Philippines including Corruptionary, the first dictionary of corruption-related words in the



world and a bestseller published and distributed by Anvil and National Bookstore / PowerBooks available nationwide and internationally.

While we wish not to discuss the details of each flaw observed in the automated election system supplied and managed by Smartmatic for the National and Local Elections held on May 10, 2010, allow us to cite a few examples. (1) The right granted to interested political parties and groups under the Automated Election Law (RA9369) was seriously emasculated by the Comelec, with guidelines it issued which are in excess of the provisions of Section 12 of RA 9369. (2) The random manual audit team established an accuracy rating of 99.6% which translates to 80 out of 20,000 vote marks incorrectly read by the PCOS. On the other hand, Comelec, in its Request for Proposal, specified a 99.995% accuracy rating which translates to 1 out of 20,000 vote marks incorrectly read by the PCOS. 1 vote mark erroneously read vs 80 vote marks erroneously read is a wide difference. (3) The genuineness of the ballots used was never established because the ultraviolet ink sensing feature of PCOS was disabled with the approval of Comelec. And, (4) The long lines and the long waiting time experienced by voters on election day may have discouraged some voters from exercising their right to elect their leaders, a case of disenfranchisement. These and other flaws, errors, and failures were publicized by various news media organizations, including the Philippine Star.

Contrary to the impression created by Ms. Reyes's opinion that CenPEG's and AES Watch's agenda is to scrap the automated elections, CenPEG and AES Watch are for the proper implementation of RA9369 and related laws which will ensure that the suffrage right of the people is respected and protected.

In the age of the Internet Ms. Reyes could have easily contacted CenPEG and AES Watch. Balanced reporting and opinion making is the norm by which journalists live by. We invite both Ms. Reyes and Mr. Romualdez for an overview and discussion of the studies conducted that they may gain a full understanding of the CenPEG and AES Watch findings and thus, avoid making insinuations that CenPEG is in "conspiracy" with some groups for a "hidden agenda."

We ask that CenPEG and AES Watch be given an equal opportunity as that enjoyed by the two columnists to air their side via your newspaper.

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