

BEHIND THE LINES

BY BOB JALDON

Los Angeles, CA. — Didn't I tell you that this election will be about power and water? And that whoever promises to improve the water system and vow sustainable and reliable electricity will get the voters' nod?

The battle for these twin issues has begun as we head to homestretch of the campaign. Congressman Celso L. Lobregat has landed yet another wicked left hook by accusing Mayor Beng Climaco-Salazar of being woefully inconsistent in her contentions regarding the electrifying power issue. Branding "Team Amarillo" as "wishy-washy" (Mr. Lobregat likes to be slang every now and then, an Ateneo trait), the congressman from Nunez wonders why the lady mayor seems to falter in discussing issues while resorting to character destruction.

Mr. Lobregat said that the Rojos have been consistent with their agenda on energy "as we strongly support the establishment of a baseload power plant in Zamboanga consistent with environmental laws and policies given the growing demand and limited power supply in Mindanao." He also said that hydro-electricity, while being the main source of power Mindanao, the Agus and Pulangi hydro power complexes should be regularly and properly maintained to sustain Mindanao's competitive advantage in power rates."

Late last year, Mayor Climaco-Salazar urged ZAMCELCO to rescind its power sales agreement with Alsons Power Group's San Ramon Power, Inc. (SRPI) for the 105-megawatt power plant in San Ramon that will ensure constant, reliable and sustainable electricity for at least 25 years when the plant becomes operational by 2019, barring hitches.

The mayor's statement prompted ZAMCELCO to contract power with the Western Mindanao Power Corp. for 50-MW and Mapalad Power Corp. for 18-MW. Note that both power plants are subsidiaries of Alsons Power Group. Still not satisfied, the mayor insisted, for some unexplained reasons, that some power should be contracted from San Miguel Corp. (SMC). She got her wish, not command, for 28-MW from SMC to be delivered soon.

By contracting power from W MPC and MPC, the three-peat congressman said that the blackout hours in Zamboanga have been reduced from a high 10 hours daily (to only three). “Why is the mayor criticizing the efforts of ZAMCELCO and its board of directors?” Lobregat blurted. Simple, sir: two of the council aspirants, one a three-time winner, of Team Colorao were former members of the ZAMCELCO board. How about the former president of the cash-strapped coop, Elbert Atilano? By castigating ZAMCELCO, the mayor is electrocuting Atilano, a member of Team Amarillo.

Mr. Lobregat further argues: The contracts with Alsons’s W MPC and MPC have created a huge impact in addressing the present power problem in Zamboanga. ZAMCELCO contracted and renewed 50-MW from W MPC and 18-MW, respectively, to avert a lingering power crisis.

Meanwhile, my coz Rudy Lim, a three-time councilor trying to make a comeback after acting as vice president of the much-maligned ZAMCELCO, said that the mayor doesn’t know what’s happening and is unaware of the positive developments (taking place) in ZAMCELCO.

Vic Liozo, retired administrator of the Philippine National Red Cross and former director of ZAMCELCO, said the mayor should check the official records of the coop on what the board did to avert a power disaster.

Because of her approach in dealing with the power and water crises, I was told that some of the big campaign donors of the mayor have stopped issuing checks and have chosen to observe, muna, where the campaign of the Yellow Army is going.

As usual, Mr. Lobregat, with his Big Brother Jomar managing his campaign, is doing better in handling its war chest, although he partly self-funds the party(ies). His traditional voters and those who have fallen in love with him in his almost 18 years as a public servant contend that he is the only one who can unify a people of varied cultures and dialects and bring everybody together.

I said so

Wednesday, 27 April 2016 14:05 -
