

Whose Business Is It Anyway? Free and Fair Elections in the Philippines

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As suggested by the recent career of 'money politics' in Filipino elections, large corporate and finance capital lend instrumental support to political parties and candidates during elections. While such decidedly partisan corporate interventions in electoral politics have attracted considerable attention, this essay examines the increasing role and significance of business backing for concerted non-partisan efforts on behalf of 'free and fair elections' in the Philippines. In situating business support for 'national citizens movements for free elections' within a broader comparative-historical perspective, the essay also captures a glimpse of the structures and dynamics behind such corporate bids for universalist leadership.

THE 1998 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IS, TO QUOTE JOSEPH 'Erap' Estrada himself, 'in the bag' (Erap tells 1998). The most interesting aspects of the recent national elections stem precisely from their relatively uneventful orderliness and predictability, star-studded candidate lists and rumored assassination plots notwithstanding. That is, despite initial concern over the putative populism of Erap and some consternation at the apparent comeback of Marcos loyalists, the accession of an opposition candidate (with prominent backing from martial-law era cronies) to the presidency on 30 June 1998 reconfirmed the democratic consolidation of 1992 when Corazon Aquino's transitional regime made way for the administration of her anointed successor, General Fidel Ramos. In short, regular electoral contests and turn-overs have become 'business as usual' once again in Filipino politics and society. The question remains, whose business?

The answer rests on a fuller appreciation of the relative dullness of these elections. At one level, the noted trend in 'money politics' whereby large corporate and finance capital lends instrumental support to political

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campaigns has begun to overshadow the 'guns, goons, and gold' that earned Filipino elections such notoriety in the past (de Castro 1992). Beyond 'money politics', the overall absence of meaningful programmatic differentiation among individual candidates and parties alike has failed to generate much in the way of either compelling debates about, or inspirational commitments to, important policy issues. In combination with this familiar blurring of party lines, the broader context of Filipino politics and society at present has further contributed to blunt the critical edge of these recent elections which instead appear as rather perfunctory, or institutionalized, exercises.

That big business should contribute to bankrolling political parties and candidates comes as no surprise. But perhaps more puzzling than such partisan corporate investments in the current climate is the Makati Business Club (MBC) which continues its prominent endorsement of concerted non-partisan efforts on behalf of 'free and fair elections'. In the May 1988 elections, for example, the MBC lent its executive director, Guillermo Luz, to serve as general secretary of the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). As the duly accredited 'citizen's arm', NAMFREL once again fielded pollwatchers to precincts around the country, but saw its more high-profile vote tabulation in La Salle Greenhills frustrated by reported widespread non-compliance with instructions from the Commission on Elections. What then is the role and significance of business support for 'national citizens movements' such as NAMFREL, which, for all its celebrated volunteer crusades, ultimately remains the most vocal champion of uneventful elections?

This question can be explored by situating business community involvement in such campaigns within a broader comparative-historical perspective. To that end, this essay returns to the three most concerted mobilization efforts for 'free and fair elections' in postcolonial Philippines — the NAMFREL of the early 1950s, the Citizens National Electoral Assembly/Operation Quick Count (CNEA/OQC) of the late 1960s, and the NAMFREL of the mid-1980s (see Coquia 1957; Hedman 1997). All of these campaigns enjoyed some measure of corporate and professional backing. Such support increased in both relative and absolute terms and emerged ever more organized in each successive campaign. If captains of industry and so-called 'secondary associations' of lawyers, accountants, and secretar-

ies have assumed greater collective responsibility for elections over time, then a closer examination of these three 'national citizens movements' may also offer a glimpse into 'the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness, and organization attained by the various social classes' (Gramsci 1971) in postcolonial Filipino society.

Before the restoration of formal democratic institutions and procedures ushered in by the events at EDSA in February 1986, the presidential elections saw the mobilization of national campaigns for 'free and fair elections' at three critical junctures (1953, 1969 and 1986). Each time, an ostensibly non-partisan, cross-class movement launched campaigns in a spirit of non-violence, citizenship and voluntarism against the proverbial 'guns, goons and gold' typically associated with Filipino elections. These campaigns involved thousands of participants in activities such as checking voters' registration lists, training pollwatchers, holding parallel vote counts, hosting bipartisan candidate fora, and challenging and documenting electoral fraud and violence. As for constituency, these collective efforts saw the notable participation of businessmen and women, religious and secular clergy, student and professional associations, and war veterans leagues.

The emergence of such campaigns coincided with surfacing tensions within Filipino oligarchical democracy. In each case, the deteriorating integrative capacity of existing mechanisms for mobilizing and channeling popular participation into elections and the increasing concentration of executive powers in the hands of a re-electionist incumbent threatened to undermine a nascent bloc of dominant social forces, including the business class. While the increasing patrimonial and praetorian proclivities of the presidential incumbent provided a conspicuous *raison d'être* for election-watch movements in 1953, 1969 and 1986, these mobilization campaigns also aimed at neutralizing short-term radical extra-electoral challenges and at mitigating long-term problems of subaltern political incorporation. On the one hand, the unparalleled aggregation of political powers and economic control under Presidents Elpidio Quirino and Ferdinand Marcos signaled

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qualitative departures from the usual incumbent prerogatives over pork barrel, constabulary intervention, electoral fraud and other dirty tricks (Doronila 1992; Stauffer 1975; Golay 1961; Hartendorp 1958; Coquia 1957). On the other hand, the rumblings of latent participatory crises constituted a perhaps less obvious but equally important backdrop to these electoral-reform campaigns. For example, Huk peasant guerrillas, *Kabataang Makabayan* radical students, and *Kilusang Mayo Uno* militant workers, with the *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* and/or the Communist Party of the Philippines in the shadows, raised the specter of extra-parliamentary politics in the early 1950s, late 1960s and mid-1980s.

NAMFREL IN THE 1950s

AFTER the notorious fraud and violence of the first postcolonial presidential elections (1949) threatened to overshadow this 'showcase of democracy' in the Philippines, the original NAMFREL emerged within the context of unresolved problems of presidential *continuismo* and participation. That is, several developments under Quirino's regime between 1949 and 1953 — including the merger of the Philippine Constabulary (PC) with the Army (thus removing PC forces from the political discretion of provincial governors), the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, and the concentration and corruption of government economic policy — signaled the usurpation of extraordinary presidential powers and portended a repeat performance of the 1949 'reign of terror' (Gutang 1991; Golay 1961).

Meanwhile, the expansion of formal political participation and the dislodging of traditional patron-client ties after the Pacific War encouraged the most significant counterhegemonic challenges to locally entrenched oligarchic rule in the Philippines at the time, namely the Huk rebellion in Central and Southern Luzon (Kerkvliet 1977). Against this backdrop of presidential *continuismo* and radical mobilization, NAMFREL launched its campaign to 'protect the ballot and save the nation' in the early 1950s.

The Philippine Jaycees and Lions Clubs. The Philippine Jaycees' official involvement in NAMFREL dated back to early August 1951 when NAMFREL inducted its first officers and board members. A Jaycees representative was appointed NAMFREL's executive vice-coordinator and, subsequently, its chair of the committee on elections. More generally,

NAMFREL also received early assurances of support from the Philippine Jaycees president who 'promised the cooperation of the national organization' (Manila Jaycees 1951). At the same time, 'the entire Lions organization in the Philippines [declared] full and unanimous support of the aims and objectives of the NAMFREL...' (Manila Jaycees 1951). In particular, the Jaycees and Lions raised funds and wealthy members donated money needed for the NAMFREL campaign. As election day approached in early November 1953, local Jaycees reportedly assisted NAMFREL's efforts to entertain foreign correspondents covering the presidential race, and facilitated the invitation of international observers 'to view Philippine democracy at work' (Observers from 1953) in the elections.

Patterned on their respective American precursors, the Philippine Jaycees had been established in 1947 and the Manila Lions Club founded only two years later. In both cases, resident American businessmen and visiting organizational representatives from the United States had assisted in the formation of Jaycees and Lions chapters in the Philippines. Similarly, the first Filipinos to involve themselves and assume leadership positions in these organizations enjoyed close relations with American business in the Philippines.

The Philippine Jaycees' founder and first president Ramon del Rosario offers perhaps the most glaring illustration of the nascent organization's entrenchment within an expanding American business economy. Having climbed the multinational corporate ladder to unprecedented heights for a Filipino citizen, del Rosario had become both vice-president and general manager at IBM Philippines before leaving for another major American corporation in 1951 (Seidman 1963). Del Rosario oversaw the organization of both the first Philippine Junior Chamber of Commerce chapter (in 1947) and the Manila Jaycees International Convention (in 1950) while on the executive board of IBM's subsidiary in Manila.

At the time of his involvement in NAMFREL, del Rosario had already transferred to the Philippine American Life Insurance Company (Philamlife), 'the number one American business success story of the post-war Philippines' (Gleek 1975). As vice-president of Philamlife and a board governor of the Management Association of the Philippines, del Rosario lent a high profile to NAMFREL when assuming the position as national chairman of its Community Centers (del Rosario named 1952). Moreover, as

the company's foremost sales and public relations executive, del Rosario commanded a 'nationwide network of agencies and branch units and supervisory offices' which helped to broaden the geographic scope of NAMFREL's organizational reach (de Jesus & Quirino 1980). Del Rosario's affiliation with a corporation which, at the time, 'was becoming an institution, and in the public's eyes, a Filipino institution despite its American ownership' (Gleeck 1975) allowed him to lend prominent support to projects publicly identified with a National Citizens Movement while also facilitating US business backing for NAMFREL's campaign.

As del Rosario's prominence in NAMFREL suggested, the availability of such support for NAMFREL in the 1951 senatorial and 1953 presidential electoral contests reflected in part the changing nature of dominant American capital in the Philippines during this period. After all, much of the country's landed oligarchy had yet to diversify into manufacturing and, furthermore, remained intimately entrenched in partisan politics, and the 'alien' status of other (notably, American and Chinese) businessmen precluded public association with a campaign of and for national citizens.¹ While many of the trade-oriented colonial-era businessmen remained after independence and a number of 'army-supplied or army-supported' new American commercial entrepreneurs established themselves at the end of World War II, US private investment in the Philippines experienced a marked shift away from import-export oriented ventures toward subsidiary plant production by large manufacturing firms in the early 1950s (Yoshihara 1985; Gleeck 1975). This pattern reflected the response of American business to the import substitution industrialization policy adopted by Quirino in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Doronila 1992; Baldwin 1975).

Contrary to both contemporary rhetoric and conventional analyses which tend to depict US foreign economic policy during this period as one guided by 'liberal free trade', these policies were actively encouraged by the Truman administration in Washington from the late 1940s (Maxfield & Nolt 1990). This expansion of the US business economy, in turn, spawned 'Jayceeism' and 'Lionism' as ideological corollaries of sorts. Facing the 'modern barbarian' of Cold War communism (Luce 1950), however, this emerging empire of civil society under Pax Americana claimed to combat Third World poverty and social mobilization with projects aimed at promoting economic prosperity and civic participation. Within this context,

NAMFREL's community centers and clean-election campaigns succeeded in attracting prominent public support from Jaycees and Lions (Internationals), as well as more circumspect backing from American business corporations. The official endorsements and organizational resources awarded NAMFREL by these corporate transnationals reflected grander American ambitions to contain communist political mobilization and export a business economy overseas at a time when the Philippines — like many other Third World countries — experienced intensifying social conflict and deepening economic crisis.

While corporate circles, especially those closely associated with an expanding American business economy, contributed both publicity and finances to NAMFREL, their organizational infrastructure remained rather limited for purposes of mobilizing a 'citizen's movement' nationwide. Despite its impressive postwar expansion, for example, Philamlife was still in the process of establishing a 'nationwide network of agencies and branch units and supervisory offices' in the early

1950s (de Jesus & Quirino 1980). The Jaycees and Lions also remained highly circumscribed in terms of their respective organizational depth and reach in the early 1950s.² Corporate capital in the Philippines enjoyed but limited circulation in the national economy which, in turn, served to restrict the scope of business managerial interventions in politics and society at the

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time. Instead, NAMFREL's mobilization efforts in large part hinged on a more extensive and established preexisting network than those offered by business-oriented institutions at the time — the Philippine Veterans League with its transnational linkage to the largest overseas US Veterans Administration in the world. Of course, the United States also extended considerable support — ranging from presidential praise and ambassadorial goodwill to Joint United States Military Advisory Group supervision and Central Intelligence Agency backing — to NAMFREL's campaign in the 1953 elections between the much-maligned incumbent Elpidio Quirino and the former USAFFE veteran turned anti-Huk fighter Ramon Magsaysay.

OPERATION QUICK COUNT IN THE LATE 1960s

IN the presidential elections of 1969, Marcos, like Quirino before him, ran for re-election after a term during which the prerogatives of the executive branch — in economic, political and military affairs — were greatly strengthened and unprecedented powers were concentrated in his hands. The 1960s had witnessed continued economic differentiation and rapid urbanization as well as the emergence of embryonic efforts at channeling peasant, worker and student collective action into new organizations identified with prominent Filipino socialists or communists and with radical, extra-electoral politics (Nowak & Snyder 1974). Against mounting popular mobilization and calls for election-boycott on campuses, the Citizens National Electoral Assembly (CNEA) and the Operation Quick Count (OQC) emerged in parallel efforts to guard and count the ballot.

While the Church-backed CNEA mobilized mostly Catholic students and lay followers in support of its ballot-watch campaign, the organizationally separate OQC instead tapped networks of civic and professional associations, as well as certain large corporations, for its vote tabulation and dissemination project. For example, locally prominent Jaycees in many provincial cities served as OQC '69 coordinators across the country. Similarly, members of professional or occupational associations (e.g. lawyers and engineers) also participated in OQC's campaign. Moreover, managers and other employees of several larger corporations joined OQC in capacities that ranged from chapter coordinator to election-return courier (see MT 1969a).

Such participation by affiliates of civic and professional associations, as well as by company employees, reflected more concerted business support behind Operation Quick Count in the 1969 presidential elections as compared to NAMFREL's campaign in 1953. Significantly, private financial institutions helped bankroll Operation Quick Count (OCQ) in 1969. For example, the 'friends of CNEA-OQC'69,' a group dominated by bank managers and finance executives, offered to provide insurance to 'cover hospitalization expenses, accident and disability benefits, death and all other risks the CNEA and OQC volunteers may suffer during the full 72 hours' of the elections (MT 1969b). The Philippine Bankers Association and two of the country's largest insurance companies donated thousands of pesos to OQC. Rural banks and provincial branches of major insurance corpora-

tions contributed organizational resources including personnel, transportation and communication to local OQC efforts in various parts of the Philippines. Similarly, 'business affiliates of Concepcion Industries Inc. and San Miguel Corporation' also supplied supporting infrastructure for OQC's campaign (Comelec-OQC 1969).

In addition to banking, finance and insurance interests, several media conglomerates also lent their resources and networks to the 1969 clean-election campaign. For example, media provided much of the organizational logistics and technical skills required for the speedy dissemination of election returns with some '137 radio and nine TV stations throughout the country and at least 12 major Manila dailies' lining up behind OQC to broadcast the results (MT 1969c; see Tutay 1969, Lacaba 1969). Media also underwrote the entire cost involved in establishing a central operation for the dissemination and analysis of OQC returns in Manila. With all this media attention, the Advertising Council of the Philippines publicly endorsed OQC in 1969 while Sarmiento Telecommunications Inc and Globe-Mackay Cable and Radio Corporation supplied telex networks and radio channels to assist OQC's campaign.

In comparison to the less concerted corporate support for NAMFREL in the early 1950s, the relatively prominent backing of financial institutions and media conglomerates behind Operation Quick Count reflected the expansion into both commercial banking and telecommunications by major Philippine business interests in the 1960s. Between 1961 and 1967, for example, 19 new commercial banks were established in the Philippines by influential landed oligarchy and other magnates who had diversified into manufacturing during the previous decade's regime of import substitution industrialization and were now adding such financial institutions to their investment portfolios (Hutchcroft 1998; Rivera 1994; Simbulan 1965). The 1960s also saw major business empires — controlled by some of the very same elite who entered banking during this time — extend their interests in publishing and broadcasting to form large multimedia networks (Lent 1991; Rosenberg 1979). Such investments in the business economy's 'informational infrastructure' by the private sector thus developed in tandem with the latter's increasing interests in capital in its most mobile and volatile form — financial or liquid capital — in the 1960s.

A Few Notes On Private Capital. This growth of private commercial banking developed with the active encouragement of Central Bank incentives including 'government deposits, rediscounting, and continued low minimum capitalization requirements' (Hutchcroft 1998), and within a broader context characterized by the 'gradual easing of exchange controls and depreciation of the peso' in the early 1960s (Baldwin 1975). Government policies to promote the proliferation of private banking also coincided with a marked increase in foreign borrowing, both public and private, in the 1960s. The United States was an important direct source of foreign capital but multilateral financial lending institutions heavily capitalized by American dollars, most notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, were also emerging as important 'official creditors' during this period (Boyce 1993; Broad 1988; Payer 1974). As a result, the banks saw their outstanding foreign exchange liabilities soar from 'below \$10 million in the years 1958-1961... to \$189 million in 1965' (Paterno 1975). The growing reliance of commercial banks upon foreign credit contributed to a development wherein, compared to government borrowing, 'private sector debt registered the strongest increase in the 1960s' (Boyce 1993).

During the course of this expansion in domestic commercial credit, the private banking sector experienced a crisis of confidence associated with its relative weakness *vis-à-vis* the executive branch and commensurate reliance upon foreign capital in the 1960s. In a number of ways, such problems anticipated the involvement of elements from among this ascendant financial bourgeoisie in such reformist national campaigns as the OQC. By the mid-1960s, for example, the credit crunch which followed in the wake of exchange decontrol and peso devaluation had not only contributed to some 1,500 Filipino-owned corporations filing for bankruptcy but also caught up with the private commercial banking sector (Lichauco 1973). With new government capitalization requirements and a licensing moratorium on private commercial banking in 1965, this sector plunged into the country's 'worst bank liquidity crisis which the Philippines had ever seen' (Hutchcroft 1998; Roxas 1969). As Filipino-owned corporations continued to explore joint ventures with better capitalized foreign investors during the 1960s, commercial banks represented by the Bankers Association of the Philippines looked to international lenders and, among other initiatives, eventually called for a third IMF credit tranche in 1969 (Payer 1973).

Against this backdrop of rapid expansion and close reliance upon both government regulatory policies and foreign capital, the emergent private banking sector seized upon OQC's vote-tabulation campaign as a welcome public relations event for purposes of exercising high-profile, low-cost private-sector leadership. That is, at the close of this increasingly radical, nationalist decade, the OQC provided private financial capital, accumulated in part through political as well as alien patronage, with a quintessentially 'technocratic' and 'national' project.

A Brief Encounter With Mass Media. As with private commercial banking, the active participation of print and broadcast media in OQC in 1969 reflected the dramatic expansion, transnationalization, and crisis of this sector in the 1960s. During this period, several so-called 'multi-media' conglomerates emerged, advertising and marketing experienced rapid growth, and business journalism received a strong boost.

In a parallel to the evident trend toward corporate professionalization associated with 'the American foundation-funded expansion of the College of Business Administration and the College of Public Administration of the University of the Philippines, [and] the new Asian Institute of Management,' this decade also witnessed the proliferation of formal educational training and professional media associations for Filipino journalists (Stauffer 1979). Whereas such efforts at increasing specialization and self-regulation typically emphasized professional standards and objective neutrality as ideal — if not actual — conditions of the Philippines' fourth estate, the media nevertheless faced mounting politicization in its midst due to nationalist protests among readers and writers, elite rivalries between competing conglomerates and Marcos' attempts at controlling or, failing that, circumventing the press in the mid- and late 1960s (Rosenberg 1979). Against the backdrop of such developments, prominent members of the business elite who had diversified into mass communications thus sought, perhaps for the first time, to assert something akin to a 'public service' role at the national level by endorsing the OQC campaign in 1969.

Although demands for the 'Filipinization' of media and advertising accompanied the expansion and transnationalization of these sectors in the 1960s (see Lent 1970), developments in the mass communications industry actually contributed to further integrate the national elite into the world

economy. As the 'flow of international advertising in Asia [grew] at a rate of approximately 40 percent' in the late 1960s, for example, dominant Filipino interests in the local media industry gained new opportunities to access and affiliate with global capital (Lent 1971). The biggest broadcast advertisers may have included large Filipino corporations such as the Republic Flour Mills, Philippine Manufacturing Company, and Philippine Refining Company, for instance, but the commercials by multinationals like Esso, Caltex, Shell, GE and Westinghouse made up a major portion of overall television advertising receipts (Lent 1970). Finally, the development of space satellites, telegraphs and telephone cables, or the so-called 'hardware or message-carrying' communication systems, linked local capital as represented by the privately owned Philippine Overseas Telecommunication Corporation, more closely to multinationals such as ATT, RCA, and ITT (Nair 1980).

If the proliferation of domestic commercial banking in the Philippines followed the rise of international financial lending, the emergence of national media conglomerates in the 1960s reflected other aspects of the unfolding integration into the world economy — the expansion of multinational corporations and the associated growth in transnational advertising. While partnerships in transnational trade and commerce were hardly new to the Philippines, they 'really took off in the 1960s... until, by 1971, only one-third of the top 250 manufacturing companies were fully Filipino-owned' (Broad 1988).³ With emphasis shifting away from import-substitution industrialization toward export-led growth, major Filipino business interests thus deepened their linkages to the global capitalist economy through transnational credits, ventures and so-called 'free trade zones'.

Against this mounting flow of transnational capital, corporations, and media entering the economy and linking up with elements of the national business elite in the 1960s, a wave of nationalist opposition gained momentum in street demonstrations, newspaper editorials and congressional speeches. Within this context, commercial banks and media conglomerates — some of the most transnationally integrated and nationally prominent representatives of private capital — embraced Operation Quick Count '69 as an occasion to publicly identify Filipino business interests with notions of national citizenship. OQC provided private commercial banking an op-

portunity to exercise leadership in a campaign ostensibly of and for national citizens; implicitly, it allowed private banking to distance itself from, what in another context has suggestively been referred to as ‘the “murky nationality” of transnational finance capital’ (Winters 1994). Similarly, the private vote-count effort allowed a ‘professionalized’ media to project an image of independent and non-partisan expert electoral coverage despite the historically close links of this estate to major commercial and political interests in the Philippines and the virulently partisan press reporting on election campaigns.

While endorsements from big business provided some impetus for professionals and employees to join the OQC, corporate backing hardly translated into a nationwide mass mobilization campaign. Despite the euphoric forecasts of CNEA-OQC that attracted the ‘most active support and most massive participation of the private sector in the history of Philippine elections’ (Kiunsala 1969), the organizational scope and — according to numerous post-election reports — electoral intervention of both these collective efforts remained rather circumscribed. In this regard, the lack of coordination between the Church-backed CNEA and the business-supported OQC further served to restrict the mobilization reach of the 1969 clean-election campaign.

In the case of Operation Quick Count, election day made it glaringly obvious that the high-profile and well-staffed national headquarters in Manila remained apart from — rather than an extension of — OQC chapters in provincial cities and towns. Without much organizational depth to its provincial chapters, the election returns from around the country barely produced a trickle of data for the OQC vote tabulation in Manila. Commenting on the limitations of this first private initiative ever to conduct a computerized count in the Philippines, OQC national coordinator Benjamin Osias (Lacaba 1969) remarked: ‘We lacked time, we lacked money, we lacked experience. My fault was in putting too much faith in the excellence of paper plans.’

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While CNEA and OQC enjoyed relatively greater — if largely segregated — involvement by business/professional associations and Church/lay organizations compared to the first NAMFREL, the campaigns of the late 1960s nevertheless remained in virtual obscurity *vis-à-vis* the (now beleaguered) international hegemony that once displayed such supportive interest in the election-watch efforts of the early 1950s. Compared to NAMFREL's 1953 and 1986 campaigns, no analogous international intercessions advanced the cause of the Citizens National Electoral Assembly (CNEA) in the 1967 senatorial and 1969 presidential elections.⁴ In fact, against the backdrop of resurgent nationalism and mounting anti-Americanism, triggered in part by the Vietnam War, US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara (Shalom 1986) stated that the US government which 'relied increasingly on the US bases and facilities in the Philippines' as the war progressed, showed scant interest in pressuring for political reforms in ways that might be construed as criticism of the incumbent Filipino president in the late 1960s. Thus, instead of signaling American support for CNEA-OQC, US Embassy cables to Washington DC in 1969 rather perfunctorily accorded CNEA 'little real influence over the conduct of the elections' (Byroade 1969). With domestic business backing still somewhat limited and the US government paying scant attention to the conduct of the 1969 Philippine presidential elections, international media proved similarly disinterested in CNEA-OQC's campaigns and opposition candidate Sergio Osmeña's bid to oust Ferdinand Marcos from Malacañang.

NAMFREL IN THE MID-1980s

AFTER the declaration of martial law in September 1972 aborted all efforts to reform Filipino electoralism writ large, the next nationwide campaign for 'free and fair elections' — through a reincarnated NAMFREL — emerged during the most acute postcolonial crisis of *continuismo* and participation in the mid-1980s. After a decade and a half of so-called 'constitutional authoritarianism' and with the KBL (*Kilusang Bagong Lipunan*) ruling-party machine entrenched throughout much of the country, few doubted Marcos' willingness and ability to script yet another 'demonstration election' for purposes of perpetuating himself in power. Yet some 20 percent of the country's villages were reportedly under CPP-NPA influence, and

mounting radical student protests, labor strikes and peasant demonstrations spilled onto city streets across the country. Against this backdrop, NAMFREL mobilized its *Bantay ng Bayan* (Watchdog of the Nation) crusade of more than half a million people to guard precincts from Batanes to Tawi-Tawi.

In the 1986 presidential snap elections, the rank and file of NAMFREL volunteers were filled in large measure by corporate employees and professional affiliates in many urbanized localities around the country. For example, white-collar employees staffed precincts and tabulation centers, middle-level managers helped organize local movement chapters, and high-ranking executives made available company resources in their respective efforts to advance NAMFREL in provincial cities and beyond. Similarly, vast numbers of lawyers, public accountants, computer encoders and radio amateurs — affiliated through professional and other specialized associations which, along with the Jaycees, Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis organizations, lent official recognition to NAMFREL — provided expert support for the national election-watch and vote-count campaigns throughout the Philippines.

The Makati Business Club. The prominent involvement by company employees and professional/civic associates in the 1986 NAMFREL — as well as in the 1984 ‘dress rehearsal’ that accompanied the elections to the National Assembly (Tancangco & Mendoza 1988) — materialized in large part due to the concentrated efforts of a vastly expanded local business community that was now clearly an actor in its own right. At the national level, the Makati Business Club (MBC) — the Philippines’ most prominent business association with a membership drawn from the country’s top corporations — threw its support behind NAMFREL. Several large corporations located in the country’s foremost financial district thus extended their extensive resources to the nation-wide clean-elections campaign.⁵ Similarly, major companies in provincial cities lent their managers, employees, and logistics to NAMFREL’s organizational work, volunteer teams and communication/transportation systems throughout the Philippines.⁶ Beyond recruiting their own people, business corporations also helped to drum up critical momentum for NAMFREL’s campaign by circulating resources in their respective backyards.

Not surprisingly, NAMFREL chose the business district of Makati as the site for its 'Citizen Rally' and corporate lawyer Raul Roco as one of its keynote speakers in October of 1984 (Veritas 1984). Furthermore, sugar planters also helped to underwrite NAMFREL as Eduardo 'Danding' Cojuangco, Marcos' most notorious crony, moved to establish control over both the marketing of sugar and the flour industry in the mid-1980s⁷ (see Manapat 1991), while Jose Concepcion, a major food tycoon and flour magnate who was serving as the movement's national chair, funnelled massive corporate resources into the 1986 clean-election campaign. Beyond the high-profile corporate backing associated with the MBC, NAMFREL also enjoyed significant support from the Philippine Bishops-Businessmen Conference (PBBC), the most prominent organized link between top-ranking business executives and their counterparts in the Catholic Church.

Philippine Business for Social Progress. A decade before the MBC assumed such a prominent role in NAMFREL during the mid-1980s, the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) first anticipated such corporate activism. Officially founded by some 50 leading businessmen in December 1970, the PBSP first began to form as members of 'the Council for Economic Development, the Philippine Business Council, and the Association for Social Action' and 'conceived of an organization that would harness the resources of private business for social development assistance' (PBSP 1981).⁸ To that end, the PBSP (with its chartered contributions from member companies in the amount of 20 percent of one percent of net profits before taxes) announced its departure from previous, largely scattered and ad hoc, corporate charity projects to a more coordinated and sustained 'business sector commitment to social development' in the Philippines. In this regard, the PBSP reflected recent concerns voiced by the Philippine Chamber of Industries which

for the first time in its history...under the prodding and guidance of certain groups within the Chamber...adopted for two consecutive years, in 1969 and 1970, convention themes directly related to social justice.

By the early 1970s, the PBSP thus appeared as the most organized effort of Philippine business for projecting 'a type of entrepreneurial leadership with a vision ... that looks to industry as an opportunity for national development and service to advance the common good' (Jayme 1970).

However, this new-found corporate concern with the age-old problem of common poverty in the Philippines involved not merely bourgeois guilt or romanticism but an element of fear aroused by the mounting political polarization and mass mobilization of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As Jose Soriano stated in his 'somber address to those businessmen gathered that December evening' of the PBSP's first official organizational meeting in 1969: 'We live in an age of social unrest....' (PBSP 1990). Against such acutely perceived threats, the PBSP thus reasoned that 'corporate inroads into development represent investments in social peace' (PBSP 1990). In the words of long-time PBSP President (1974-1988) Bienvenido Tan Jr (PBSP 1990) as he reflected upon the inspiration behind this corporate initiative:

Truth be said some were not motivated by such lofty ideals as helping the disadvantaged or sharing their wealth or expertise.... Some were in fact just worried that, if they did nothing to [help] save the country, another ideology would take over that would not look too kindly on our way of life.

Regardless of any lingering doubts as to the lasting impact of such projects and programs, and despite wavering support from among its corporate constituents toward the close of the 1970s, the PBSP continued in its endeavors to counter the acknowledged problem that 'as a do-gooder, the public image of business failed to convince' (PBSP 1990).

Notwithstanding its efforts at coordinating corporate support for showcase projects of national development and social progress throughout the 1970s, the PBSP expressed neither common criticism of Marcos' economic policies per se, nor overt opposition to the martial law regime during the same period. Instead, Marcos' declaration of martial law initially elicited largely favorable and cooperative reactions from among business interests wary of the continued mass mobilization and rising inflation and unemployment in the early 1970s. Vicente Jayme⁹ recalled that:

For a while, maybe the first six months, there were a few of us who thought that this might be a new man.... In the choice between an authoritarian government and a communist totalitarian godless government, we could work with the former.

Thereafter, the subsequent barrage of presidential decrees and letters of instruction concerning some form of economic intervention or other contributed to the silencing rather than the articulation of anything like a concerted business voice throughout the decade (de Dios et al. 1984).

The New Business of Business. Against the backdrop of the Dewey Dee scandal and the Marcos regime's continued commitment to underwrite ailing crony businesses, the first public denunciation from the country's top corporate strata appeared in the form of a letter penned by Benguet Mining Corporation president Jaime Ongpin to the *Asian Wall Street Journal* on 6 June 1981. This was soon followed by others in the same paper, as well as in *Fortune Magazine*. Ongpin patiently pursued his letter campaign to the foreign press and also closely followed their reports in what appeared to be a self-styled, contemporary adaptation of the *ilustrado* Propaganda Movement:

The indefatigable Jimmy was always combing the world's publications for such articles, was clipping and xeroxing them, and was mailing them to various personages, even people he didn't know, in the hope of arousing a more vocal opposition among the upper classes (Joaquin 1990).

While unquestionably the first and, for a while, the only prominent corporate executive to stake out such an openly critical position, Ongpin nevertheless enjoyed growing support from among representatives of non-crony capital as suggested by his appointment to the recently founded MBC's board of directors in 1982, as well as his subsequent popularity on the Chamber of Commerce guest-speaker circuit. Established in 1981 with reported assistance from, for example, the Ayala Corporation-sponsored Filipinas Foundation and the Opus Dei-linked Center for Research and Communication, the MBC emerged as the most ambitious private-sector alternative to the existing and allegedly 'politically-oriented' Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI). Citing 'the results of a pri-

vate survey that membership in the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry represented only 20 percent of the top 1000 corporations in the Philippines,' then Ayala president Enrique Zobel underscored 'the need for a leading forum for private business' in an October 1981 press conference (MBC 1981).¹⁰ Within two years time, the MBC publicly argued in a widely debated position paper that 'the present problem is "political" and not "financial".' The 9th Philippine Business Conference had confronted Marcos with critical questions and comments about Philippine economic and political reforms in an unusually intense meeting held in Malacañang Palace. By 1984, US Embassy cables to Washington described the MBC as 'a locus of business activism' that showed considerable interest in supporting moves to organize for clean elections. Furthermore, the first anniversary of the Aquino assassination saw another of the Philippines' foremost corporate executives, Ramon del Rosario Jr, march to the much fought-over Mendiola Bridge and then, in *Business Day*, urge his 'friends in the cozy world of business and finance' to join the fray. This prompted the following reported reply from Ongpin (Joaquin 1990): 'Why don't we organize a businessmen's march to Mendiola and ask the officers and directors of PCCI, MBC, MAP, Finex, etc., to lead the way?'

As outlined above, protracted trends in economic development and crony capitalism prefaced the emergence of corporate capital in the vanguard leadership of NAMFREL's campaign in the mid-1980s. Leading representatives of corporate capital had launched the PBSP in an unprecedented declaration of support for 'national development' in the early 1970s. As crony capitalism increasingly exacted its toll on less-favored business interests and on the Filipino economy writ large, corporate executives faced problems in the form of brewing social unrest and declining purchasing power. These problems were further underlined by the uncertainty due to manifest political adventurism and continued capital flight from among the ranks of corporate executives in the early 1980s. Such developments activated (non-crony) national businessmen

Protracted trends in economic development and crony capitalism prefaced the emergence of corporate capital in the vanguard leadership of NAMFREL's campaign in the mid-1980s.

and women into organizing the MBC and into pooling their considerable resources in a massive show of 'enlightened entrepreneurial leadership' while yellow-confetti rallies were erupting on commercial city streets in the mid-1980s. Thus, when looking back upon the 1984 'dress rehearsal' election watch, the PBSP national president could report with obvious satisfaction that 'NAMFREL was particularly noted for the heavy, direct participation of prominent business personalities' (cited in PBSP 1984).

Compared to the election-watch campaigns of the late 1960s, NAMFREL in the mid-1980s enjoyed more extensive business involvement and, as a result, greater success in mobilizing broader support among civic and professional associations. The prominent leadership and backing provided by representatives of the non-crony capitalist class in the Philippines reflected the underlying growth of corporate investments and the eventual initiative to organize collectively on behalf of such interests, sparked in large part by the deepening crisis of crony capitalism. Compared to previous campaigns which attracted either mostly symbolic (1953) or segregated (1969) support from among bishops and businessmen, NAMFREL also benefited from the relatively greater organizational commitment and coordination of both the Catholic Church and corporate capital which, under the auspices of the Philippine Bishops-Businessmen Conference, 'spearheaded' the most successful 'national citizens movements for free and fair elections' in 1986. Against the backdrop of the growth in business and the Catholic Church's organizational scope, density and resources, as well as the renewed manifestations of US support, NAMFREL 1986 thus emerged as the most wide-reaching, broad-based and well-oiled of the three election-watch campaigns.

CONCLUSION

IN contrast with the long-standing institutional presence and interventionist capacities of the United States government and the Catholic Church in the Philippines, a national business community only gradually emerged as a unified and self-organized social actor in the postwar period, as reflected in its increasing involvement in the three electoral reform campaigns discussed above.

In the early 1950s, for example, the US government and the Philippine Veterans League made up for the relative absence of a domestic, capi-

talist class whose support for NAMFREL remained largely confined to public endorsements from the Philippines Jaycees and Lions while prominent oligarchs remained entrenched in partisan machine politics. In the late 1960s, by contrast, Operation Quick Count banked on the direct support of an emerging domestic financial capitalist class for the organization and execution of its parallel vote-count effort. Finally, in the mid-1980s, NAMFREL materialized, in large part, due to the machinations of a vastly expanded business community, now clearly an actor in its own right.

Viewed in comparative-historical context, NAMFREL's role in the May 1998 elections may at first appear all the more puzzling. In marked contrast to the cases examined above, no analogous crisis of presidential *continuidismo* and popular participation accompanied the most recent elections and yet they too sported high-profile NAMFREL campaigns. However, the greater mobilizational scope of each successive campaign reflected in large part organized capital's increasing commitment to such 'national citizens movements', thus underscoring significant and cumulative change over time.

If democratic consolidation and capitalist development have favored the emergence and expansion of a Filipino business class with aspirations to universalistic leadership, they have nevertheless also proved perfectly compatible with the noted rise of 'money politics' and the particularistic interests associated therewith. In this sleight of hand, and accompanying the evident blurring of the lines between 'democratic' and 'non-democratic' politics and 'non-crony' and 'crony' business in the post-Marcos period, a peculiarly 'non-political' dominant discourse of 'good governance' and 'anti-corruption' has emerged. Against this backdrop, the MBC's continued sponsorship of NAMFREL in the aftermath of the 1986 elections and its much-celebrated *Bantay ng Bayan* crusade suggest that, in Gramscian terms, 'the development and expansion of the particular group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the "national" energies' (Gramsci 1971). As if confirming that 'corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too' (Gramsci 1971), the Filipino business class — while bankrolling political candidates — persists in lending prominent leadership and substantial support to campaigns

for 'free and fair elections'. However, against the enduring realities of social injustice and class hegemony, such ritual celebrations of procedural democracy and national citizenship may leave less harmony than hangover in their wake. With the Asian economic crisis still looming large, the MBC's recent attempts at reining in the purported 'pro-poor' proclivities of the Estrada presidency anticipate a rude awakening from the collective paramnesia that has made 'free and fair elections' the new business of business.

NOTES

1. Of course, NAMFREL benefited from both sugar-bloc factional politics and the Nacionalista Party/Magsaysay For President Movement organizational machines (Coquia 1957). However, much effort seems to have been devoted to keeping such support secret or, at least, very low profile so as not to tarnish the 'non-partisan' image of NAMFREL. This stands in marked contrast to the public endorsements of NAMFREL made by, notably, the Jaycees or the Lions.

2. For example, from a membership of 23 when it was first organized in March 1949, the Manila Lions Club membership reportedly increased only to 207 within five years. Ten years later, the roster remained at 237 active members 'representing the cream of the business, commerce, industry and the professions of the City of Manila.' Manila Lions Club, *10th Annual Report: 1958-1959*, p. 3.

3. For example, General Electric gained controlling interests in both the Soriano-founded Philippine Electric Manufacturing Company and the Del Rosario Brothers' Appliance Corporation in 1963. Similarly, Gulf Oil obtained the majority share in Filoil Refinery in 1965. Two other large Filipino corporations — Dante Santos' Philippine Appliance Corporation and the Tuason-controlled BF Goodrich Philippines — transferred to American ownership in the mid-1960s (Yoshihara 1985).

4. However, the American Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines provided donations to the clean election effort in 1969.

5. Interviews with Jose Concepcion and Isobel Wilson, company president and NAMFREL-Makati chair on 15 October 1992; and with Teresa Nieva, NAMFREL treasurer on 5 November 1992. According to Wilson, whose company, Data Graphics, served as NAMFREL-Makati's headquarters and printed volunteer manuals and other materials, 'funds were solicited from friends and business partners by word of mouth — mostly from owners or high-level executives, or their wives — both in cash and kind' often in 'sums like 10,000 to 20,000 pesos.'

6. According to Nieva, the Ayala and Benguet corporations lent both helicopters and airplanes to NAMFREL. In the provincial cities, Cebu

and Davao, the Aboitiz-owned local power corporations supplied critical logistical resources and encouraged their employees to work for NAMFREL. Interviews with Jake N Marquez, Aboitiz-company executive and NAMFREL-Cebu chair, Cebu City, 6 October 1992; Alfonso S Ybañez, Aboitiz-company executive and NAMFREL-Davao chair, September 1991; and Lualhati Hilario, NAMFREL-Davao treasurer, Davao City, 17 September 1992.

7. Manapat (1991) reports that Cojuangco made two serious stabs at controlling the marketing of sugar in 1985 and 'would most probably have ultimately succeeded in monopolizing the marketing of sugar had Marcos not been deposed the following year.' At the time, Cojuangco also attempted to seize control of the flour industry and by early 1986 when 'Marcos was deposed and only a few months after he started his activities in the wheat and flour industry, Cojuangco had already registered not less than 20 companies to import wheat'.

8. Leading up to the launching of the PBSP, some 'fifty business executives met in a workshop conference sponsored by the Council for Economic Development in Makati' in September of the same year (PBSP 1974). At the time, the Council for Economic Development was headed by Emilio Abello; the Philippine Business Council by Jose Soriano; and the Association for Social Action by Howard Dee; all of whom joined the PBSP board of trustees.

9. Interview with Vicente Jayme, former NAMFREL national vice-chair, Pasig, 9 November 1992. Jayme was a top executive with the Private Development Corporation of the Philippines from 1963 until 1965, when he felt compelled to resign because of his NAMFREL involvement. He had also served as president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry when the PBSP and the BBSP were first organized and was a founding member of both. Jayme was the national chair of the PBSP in 1983-1984.

10. In-house publications of more recent vintage introduce the MBC as a 'non-stock, non-profit organization composed of over 600 senior executives representing almost 350 leading corporations... from all major sectors in the country....' See, for example, MBC (1996).

11. Embassy to State, in Chadwyck-Healy, Inc. & National Securities Archives, *The Philippines: The Marcos Years* 02745, 1984/03/14, 0611 Z. By 1984, the MBC had organized its 'Speakers' Bureau' of Jaime Ongpin, Vicente Paterno, Bernardo Villegas (CRC) and Jose Romero. Using the Benguet Corporation plane, according to Paterno, they would 'fly to one place in the morning, speak there at lunch, then leave for another place, speak there at dinner, and stay overnight... on weekends,' cited in Joaquin (1990).

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