



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

To the Editor

LET'S HAVE THE COMPLETE EQUATION (on the rollback issue)

I thought I was presented a sterile issue when my privilege speech in the Lower House did not draw the usual supporters and dissenters among my colleagues after asking about the anomalous practices at the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA). The carefully prepared briefing material easily convinced me that the shippers' concerns were valid and that an easy solution was forthcoming. After all, the economic arguments for a rate rollback are easy to understand and appreciate, coming even from a representative of a district that has no port under it (2nd District of Bulacan).

It was so easy for me to identify with the concerns of my constituents who bought corn for their livestock feeds from Mindanao at P6.00 per kilo and be told that the price in Mindanao was only P3.60 per kilo.

I have been shown copies of letters and resolutions addressed to the President, not only coming from shipper organizations in Manila, but also even of those from Cebu and Mindanao. I know therefore, that there was a clamor for a rollback in cargo handling, even before the 4th National Food Congress in Cagayan de Oro, where the President made an announcement regarding the rollback. The order must have been properly addressed to Sec. Pantaleon Alvarez of DOTC and not to PPA General Manager Alfredo Cusi, had she meant anything else but a cargo handling rate rollback. The President was fully aware that there was already a statement in the rollback discussions between Mr. Meneleo "Ito" Carlos and GM Cusi.

Recent redundant press release in the newspaper (Manila Bulletin, April 29 page C1 and Metro page 4) come short of accusing me of putting words into the President's mouth. I leave that to the readers to make a judgment in the light of transcript of speeches made during the Cagayan de Oro Food Congress.

What concerns me now is the apparent attempt of a Presidential sub-altern to define the parameters of the rollback issue. PPA GM Cusi has warned the Cabinet and the President that a rollback to cargo handling rates might not be acceptable to labor. The logic behind the conclusion has not been explained by Mr. Cusi publicly though. When I first met him together with some advocates of the rollback at the Manila Hotel, I was surprised at Mr. Cusi's brutal frankness when he told the advocates to go ahead and bring the matter to court. It is a good thing that the cooler heads at the coalition wanted to exhaust all administrative remedies offered them under our system of government. (All these happened before the Cagayan Food Congress).

Mr. Cusi has indeed introduced a political consideration into an erstwhile economic problem by inferring that additional headaches for the President would develop once labor is displeased. Is this why Mr. Cusi as Chair of the Cebu Ports Authority (CPA) allowed the President to sign some kind of agreement extending the OPASCOR contract for another 15 years to Mr. Democrito T. Mendoza even without the consideration and approval of the CPA Commission?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials "LH".

If so, then why stop with just labor? Why don't we complete the whole equation of the rollback issue to include Endika Aboitiz, Enrique Razon, Eusebio Tangco, Doris Magsaysay-Ho and the 300,000 port workers they claim would be adversely affected? On the other side, we can have the rollback advocates led by Joji Ilagan-Bian of Mindanao Business Council, Ito Carlos of Export Development Council, Sergio Ortiz-Luis of PHILEXPORT and PCCI, Donald Dee of ECOP, Mike Varela of PCCI and the millions of farmers, industrial workers and consumers to complete the whole equation. This humble representation could be added to the right side of the equation too.

The rollback issue, thus completely presented can now be easily decided upon by the President.



HON. WILLIE BUYSON VILLARAMA
Representative, 2nd District of Bulacan