

5. City Government

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5

City Government

Jesse Robredo has been winning the mayoral election overwhelmingly, and his people have been capturing all the elective posts in the city government. The key of his success has been his control over state resources. Based on this control, Robredo has constructed secure relations with various socioeconomic sectors of the city. This structure of power is common all over the Philippines, but Robredo has shown extraordinary skill in resource utilization even when compared with other politicians. This has been an important factor for the support that Naga City citizens have given him. This chapter focuses on the management of the city government as a form of resource utilization.

Local Government in the Philippines

There are two opposing perceptions of local government in the Philippines. One sees it as part of a centralized state while the other regards it as part of a not-so-centralized system and enjoying considerable self-rule. The view that Philippine local government is part of a centralized government system explains this centralization as a consequence of colonial rule, both Spanish and American. The Spanish established centralized rule, while the American had no choice but to keep it in order to maintain colonial rule, despite their initial intention of moving toward autonomy (Romani and Thomas 1954; Ocampo and Panganiban 1985). On the other hand, Hutchcroft (2000) points out the significance of expediency in American colonial rule to get the cooperation of

local powers in the pacification of the Philippines, as well as the ideal of planting American notions of self-governance. He asserts that the local government system in the Philippines did not have any centralization because of such expediency and ideals.¹

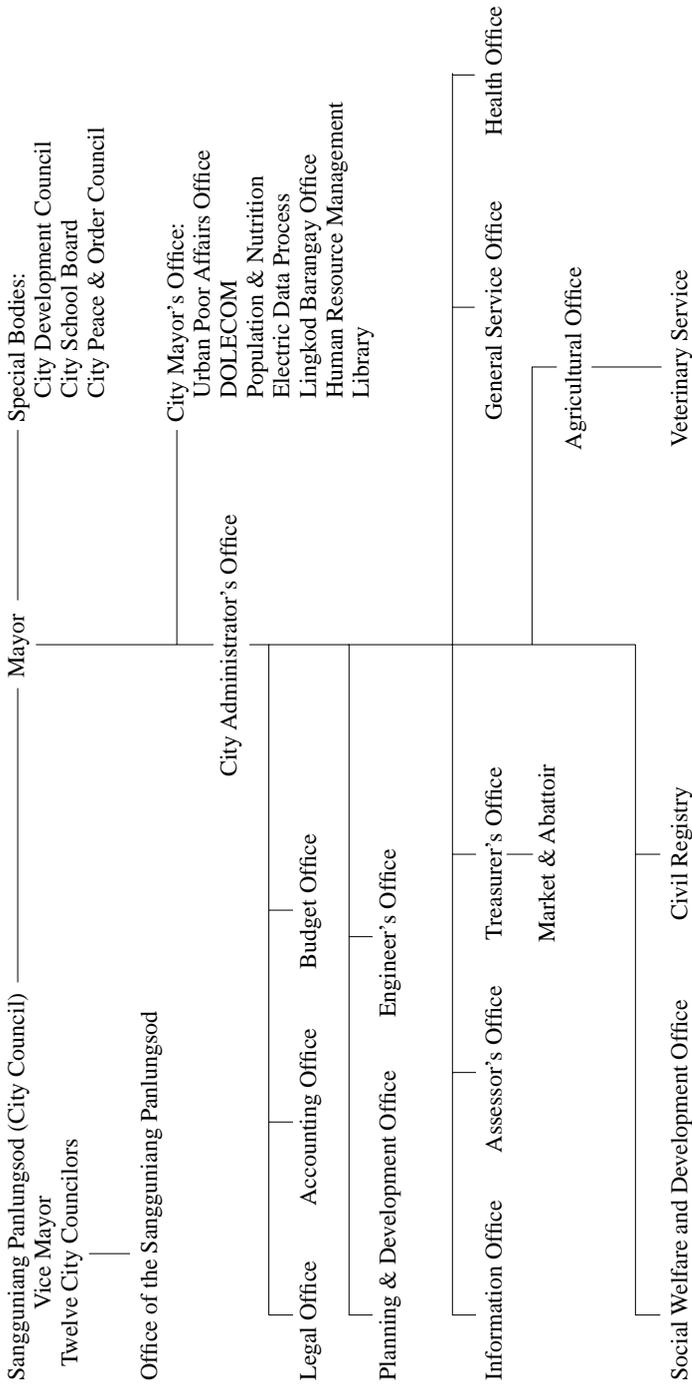
It is true that the colonial Philippines did not have a federal system. Many posts in local government were appointed by the central government which supports the argument for centralization.² However, it is a matter of degree. While the Philippines did not have self-rule compared with the American system, it did have local elections that were held from a very early stage of American colonial rule, and elected local officials had some discretion over resources at the local government level, something which was quite rare in other colonial settings. Such ambivalence continues to characterize the local government system in the post-colonial Philippines. Elected officials in Philippine local government enjoy rather large discretion over the utilization of resources. At the same time, the perception that central-local relations are centralized further increases the inclination toward decentralization in the country. This sort of institutional framework, especially the relatively large discretion that a chief executive, i.e., mayor, has over state resources, is important when examining Robredo's governance.

The Local Government Code of 1991 has been particularly important for providing the institutional framework for the Robredo administration in Naga City. It was enacted after Robredo assumed the mayorship in 1988 and provides the structures and operational procedures of the city government. The code is perceived as the most progressive development in the trend toward decentralization in the Philippines. The code transfers from the central to local governments (1) certain government services including personnel and assets, (2) powers to appoint local officials, and (3) certain regulatory powers; moreover, the code increases the local government share of the internal revenue allotment and promotes the participation of nongovernmental organizations and people's organizations in local governance.³ While the previous local government system gave city mayors great discretionary power over resources in city government, the Local Government Code of 1991 has expanded their prerogatives.

Councilors and Government Employees

Figure 5-1 indicates the organizational structure of the Naga City Government. It is not greatly different from other cities in the Philippines. The mayor is the chief executive who has the final say in finance, regulations, and personnel management. The Sangguniang Panlungsod (City Council) is composed

Fig. 5-1. Naga City Government (1997)



Source: Naga City Government.

of the vice mayor as ex officio chair, ten elected councilors, the president of the Liga ng mga Barangay (League of Barangays), and the president of the Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Council).⁴

As the local legislative body, the City Council carries out the functions of enacting ordinances, approving resolutions, and appropriating funds.⁵ Such functions are extremely important because they affect the distribution of benefits, the development of infrastructure, and the regulation of social sectors. Hence, the mayor tries to hold the majority of seats in the council to secure his plans for utilizing government resources. This compels the mayor to see that his slate of candidates wins in elections. Then he has to make sure he retains a certain degree of influence over his city councilors after elections.

Robredo has been successful in gaining the majority and maintaining his influence. The Naga City Council is organizationally independent of the mayor, but it is well under the mayor's influence because, as mentioned in the previous chapter, all the city councilors since 1992 have belonged to Robredo's camp. Councilors and department heads gather and decide on agendas in the mayor's office every Wednesday before the regular city council session. The mayor sometimes appears at the sessions and makes some unofficial proposals or comments regarding important matters.⁶ The mayor's influence over city councilors is derived from their dependence on him for election and for the release of city government resources. Chapter 7 will discuss these points in detail.

Although the mayor's influence over city councilors is very important, a more remarkable aspect of the mayor's influence is seen with city government employees. Most of the departments and offices are line agencies as provided by the Local Government Code of 1991. On the other hand, the City Mayor's Office operates like a staff agency and provides ad hoc functions. Offices for managing people's organizations (which will be dealt with later) are placed under this office.

The number of city government employees in Naga City was 785 as of December 31, 1994. Among them, there were 14 elected officials including sector representatives on the City Council, 379 permanent employees who had secured tenure, and 392 casual employees whose recruitment and termination was at the discretion of the city mayor (Naga 1999). Casual employees made up 50.8 per cent of total city government employees (excluding elected officials and sector representatives on the City Council). This number was rather larger than the national average (Table 5-1).

In explaining the huge number of casual employees, the city government claims that their employment is advantageous financially. With permanent employees the city government has to provide more funds for salaries, pensions, insurance, and other benefits. The employment of casual workers solves

TABLE 5-1

TOTAL NUMBER AND RATIO OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL IN THE PHILIPPINES, 1993–97

| | Number | | Ratio of Regular/Non-regular Personnel | | | |
|--|---------|-------|--|------|-------------|------|
| | Total | % | Regular | % | Non-regular | % |
| Local government personnel in the Philippines: | | | | | | |
| 1993 | 298,892 | 100.0 | 225,887 | 75.6 | 73,005 | 24.4 |
| 1994 | 316,023 | 100.0 | 212,918 | 67.4 | 103,105 | 32.6 |
| 1995 | 353,654 | 100.0 | 268,657 | 76.0 | 84,997 | 24.0 |
| 1996 | 353,897 | 100.0 | 253,190 | 71.5 | 100,707 | 28.5 |
| 1997 | 367,551 | 100.0 | 261,620 | 71.2 | 105,931 | 28.8 |
| Naga City Government* | 771 | 100.0 | 379 | 49.2 | 392 | 50.8 |

Sources: CSC (n.d.) and Naga (1999).

Note: Regular denotes tenured and coterminous personnel and non-regular denotes casual and contractual personnel.

* Number of Naga City Government personnel is as of 1994. Total number excludes elective officials and sectoral representatives on the city council.

such problems especially given the city's limited budget. This may be true, but the existence of a large number of casual employees enables the city mayor to influence this large group of people through employment regardless to his intentions, since their employment depends on the mayor's reelection. If an opponent were to take the mayoral seat, their employment would be put in jeopardy. They would most likely lose their jobs as the opponent would give their positions to his followers as rewards. Therefore, they need to work hard to support the mayor in elections to keep their jobs.⁷ This can be clearly observed in the offices in charge of political activities, like the Lingkod Barangay Office (Serve Barangay Office), which organizes people's organizations. Among the nine workers in the office at the time of this study, only one was a permanent employee. There are also some key posts, like city administrator, city legal officer, and city information officer, that are coterminous with the mayor's term, and they can be replaced as the mayor changes. A personnel system where the chief executive holds huge discretionary powers, i.e., a spoils system, which was introduced by American colonial rule, prevents the emergence of an autonomous city bureaucracy. Instead, it places the bureaucracy under the mayor's control and makes it work as a part of his political machine.

Financial Management

Through his influence on the city council and city government employees, the

mayor fulfills his intentions in managing the state resources. The city budget is the main resource of the city government, and this section will look at how it is managed.

The budget is enacted by the City Council. If the council is under the mayor's control, he has no serious problem getting it approved. Naga City may be rather special because the mayor's party holds all the seats. However, in the dispensing of funds, there is no great difference among local governments. The mayor has final discretion over it. Combined with his institutional control over personnel, he can largely decide how to spend funds.

Table 5-2 shows the revenues of the Naga City Government in 1988, when Robredo became mayor, and in 1996. Between those years, the Local Government Code of 1991 was enacted, and internal revenue allotment was greatly increased. This raised the total amount of revenues by 650.8 per cent, and increased the city government's dependence on national funds from 39.7 per cent to 49.9 per cent, although the expansion of revenues had started even before the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991, and this rise in the scale of revenues had raised Naga City's classification revenue-wise from a third-class to a first-class city.⁸ Besides the internal revenue allotment,⁹ local funds, mainly from local taxes, also increased by 468.4 per cent. This increase was due to a rise in land values brought on by the expansion of the city's economy and to an improvement in tax collections.

The rise in the city's financial status can be understood as a growth in available resources. It can also be interpreted as a growth in Robredo's power base. Moreover the improvement of financial management is a strong factor convincing the middle class, which is concerned about cleanness and efficiency in governance, to support the Robredo administration. On the other hand, landowners and business capitalists in the city criticize his administration with complaints that the taxes in the city are heavy.

Table 5-3 shows the city's expenditures by areas of services. In 1988 general public services composed the biggest portion, while in 1996 general public services, economic services, and engineering services make up most of the expenditures. Table 5-4 shows expenditures by expenditure type. Personal services and maintenance and other operating expenses made up almost all expenditures in 1988, but capital outlays had increased by 1996. The increase in capital outlays was equivalent to the increase in public works. For example, 1995 expenditures by departments showed that the Engineer's Office accounted for 27.7 per cent of total expenditures (Naga 1997b, p. 38). Personal services and public works are the two main areas of the city government's expenditures.¹⁰

Public works in the city are basically the construction of roads and drain-

TABLE 5-2
CASH INFLOW OF NAGA CITY GOVERNMENT

| Sources of Funds | (Peso) | | | |
|---|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| | Year 1988 | % | Year 1996 | % |
| Balance at beginning of year: | | | | |
| From previous year's current operations | 2,100,400.99 | | 18,978,605.29 | |
| From continuing operations | 471,895.22 | | 5,725,352.93 | |
| Total surplus | 2,572,296.21 | 8.5 | 24,703,958.22 | 10.9 |
| Current operating revenues: | | | | |
| A. Local funds: | | | | |
| Property tax revenue | 3,348,290.57 | | 11,121,821.83 | |
| Business tax | 4,633,458.75 | | 34,312,108.73 | |
| Operating & miscellaneous revenue | 4,818,724.15 | | 28,777,126.92 | |
| Borrowings | 0 | | 1,500,000.00 | |
| Special education fund | 2,651,342.76 | | 12,117,991.89 | |
| Subtotal | 15,451,816.23 | 51.1 | 87,829,049.37 | 38.7 |
| B. National funds: | | | | |
| Internal revenue allotment | 6,583,020.06 | | 112,537,115.00 | |
| Specific tax allotment | 4,944,990.93 | | 0 | |
| National aid (DPWH767-7) | 475,000.00 | | 0 | |
| Grants and aid | 0 | | 596,944.00 | |
| Subtotal | 12,003,010.99 | 39.7 | 113,134,059.00 | 49.9 |
| Total current operating revenues | 27,454,827.22 | 90.8 | 200,963,108.37 | 88.6 |
| Non-current operating revenues: | | | | |
| A. Adjustments: | | | | |
| Additions | 379,276.72 | | 1,378,286.12 | |
| Deductions | -181,987.50 | | -110,261.79 | |
| Total non-current operating revenues | 197,289.22 | 0.7 | 1,268,024.33 | 0.6 |
| Total operating revenues | 27,652,116.44 | 91.5 | 202,231,132.70 | 89.1 |
| Grand total | 30,224,412.65 | 100.0 | 226,935,090.92 | 100.0 |

Source: Naga (1997a).

Note: Per cent indicates the percentage of grand total.

age. These are the main requests of city residents, and the main task of the Robredo administration is responding to these requests. Resident appreciation of the government's sure and quick responses to their requests is, without doubt, the basis for Robredo's support in elections. At the same time, public works provide jobs for contractors in the city. This urges contractors to play an important role in elections as well.

Despite the expansion of the city government's finances, local financial

TABLE 5-3
CASH OUTFLOW OF NAGA CITY GOVERNMENT BY AREAS OF SERVICES

| Expenditures | (Peso) | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| | Year 1988 | % | Year 1996 | % |
| Current operating expenses: | | | | |
| A. General public services | 11,372,305.15 | 44.5 | 39,503,840.97 | 20.1 |
| B. Health services | 2,073,418.32 | 8.1 | 14,503,211.31 | 7.4 |
| C. Social security & welfare | 30,748.42 | 0.1 | 3,340,313.73 | 1.7 |
| D. Housing & community services | 773,067.37 | 3.0 | 19,037,821.08 | 9.7 |
| E. Other community & social services | 252,630.49 | 1.0 | 6,885,173.29 | 3.5 |
| F. Economic services | 3,006,976.86 | 11.8 | 37,544,202.70 | 19.1 |
| G. Engineering services | 5,511,838.71 | 21.5 | 40,937,098.07 | 20.9 |
| H. Education, culture & sports | 2,132,909.66 | 8.3 | 13,608,461.32 | 6.9 |
| I. Other purposes | 170,950.75 | 0.7 | 16,200,173.02 | 8.3 |
| Total current operating expenses | 25,324,845.73 | 99.0 | 191,560,295.49 | 97.7 |
| Continuing appropriations | 252,956.47 | 1.0 | 4,605,964.76 | 2.3 |
| Total operating expenses | 25,577,802.20 | 100.0 | 196,166,260.25 | 100.0 |

Source: See Table 5-2.

Note: Per cent indicates percentage of total.

TABLE 5-4
CASH OUTFLOW OF NAGA CITY GOVERNMENT BY EXPENDITURE TYPE

| Expenditures | (Peso) | | | |
|--|---------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| | Year 1988 | % | Year 1996 | % |
| Personal services | 14,152,850.01 | 55.3 | 79,102,099.86 | 40.3 |
| Maintenance and other operating expenses | 10,600,615.15 | 41.4 | 53,865,208.48 | 27.5 |
| Capital outlay | 824,337.04 | 3.2 | 63,198,951.91 | 32.2 |
| Total | 25,577,802.20 | 100.0 | 196,166,260.25 | 100.0 |

Source: See Table 5-2.

Note: Per cent indicates percentage of total.

resources are not enough to maintain firm political power, and these resources augmented by those from the national government. These supplemental resources are especially necessary in order to respond to resident requests. They are supplemental for Naga City because the financial status of the city is rather better than other cities and municipalities. For local governments that cannot enjoy the level of revenues available to Naga City, it is easy to understand that the inflow of resources from the national government accounts for a substantial part of their finances.

Robredo was able to build up close relations with President Ramos as a result of the 1992 elections, so he did not have much difficulty in accessing national resources. Although it is hard to estimate exactly the extent that Ramos provided benefits (Table 5-2 shows the supplemental funds from the national government going into the city government revenues), Robredo himself admits that the president made available not a little assistance from presidential funds like the calamity fund.¹¹ As mentioned already in Chapter 4, the close relations between Robredo and Ramos were demonstrated by Robredo's appointment as chairman of the Regional Development Council. The creation of the Metro Naga Development Council through an executive order and holding the Palarong Pambansa (National Games) in the city were also the results of these close relations. Being president of the League of Cities or chairman of the Regional Development Council is itself rather symbolic and not directly lucrative. But these symbolic positions are stepping stones for accessing more national resources. Even the holding of the Palarong Pambansa was accompanied by additional funds for infrastructure construction.¹²

Besides his relations with the president, pork barrel funds provided by senators and congressmen are also important funding from national resources. Pork barrel funds fall into two categories: the Countrywide Development Fund (CDF) and the Congressional Initiative Allocation (CIA). The CDF is the allocation in the national budget to each senator and representative for infrastructure projects, the purchase of materials and equipments, and other purposes identified by each legislator. In 1996, 18 million pesos were allotted to each senator and 12.5 million to each representative. The CIA is the allocation that goes to various government departments and agencies and which the legislator decides how to use. It is allotted to each legislator unequally according to his or her influence. Senior committee chairpersons tend to have the largest allocations.¹³

Robredo expends a lot of time and energy to bring pork barrel funding to the city. In order to promote the inflow of these funds, the city government invites senators to Naga City, and the mayor and city councilors also often visit congressmen directly to request the release of funds. When the mayor is not on good terms with the congressman of the second district of Camarines Sur, where Naga City is located, he seeks assistance from congressmen of other districts. Robredo often approached Rep. Roland Andaya of the first district, who was chairman of the Congressional Appropriation Committee, one of the biggest dispensers of pork barrel funds in the country.¹⁴

The Mayor's Performance

The institutional framework of local government and its significance for local power were described above. Although discussed in terms of Naga City specifically, the institutional framework and its significance characterize local government and power generally in the Philippines. While sharing the general characteristics, Robredo's performance in Naga City governance also needs to be considered. Although Robredo's political base does not stand on his performance alone, as will be treated in the following chapters, good performance which has been recognized by national and international agencies has provided him with a sort of charisma as well as support from certain socio-economic sectors.

Robredo's performance can be roughly divided into three categories, namely, improved efficiency in city government, development of infrastructure, and openness of policy making to the citizens.

Improved efficiency in government has basically been the quicker issuance of licenses and increased revenues through proper taxation. Improvement in garbage collection could also be included in this category (see Table 5-5). Robredo introduced the "Productivity Improvement Program" in the early part of his administration, and tried to focus on employee empowerment and improvements in systems and procedures (see Table 5-6).¹⁵

In infrastructure development, road and drainage construction has been the main area. Robredo also started construction of the new Central Business District. Housing projects for the urban poor could also be put into this category. Table 5-7 shows the road inventory for the Naga City Government. Although the unsurfaced category increased slightly from 1987 to 1996, concrete roads also substantially increased under the Robredo administration. Almost all roads are paved, especially in the center of the city including areas

TABLE 5-5
DAILY GARBAGE GENERATION, COLLECTION, AND RATE OF EFFICIENCY, 1988-96

| Indicators | (Metric ton) | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 1988 | 1990 | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 |
| Total garbage generated (city) | 72.0 | 73.4 | 74.9 | 77.1 | 79.4 |
| Garbage generated (urban) | 64.8 | 66.1 | 67.4 | 69.4 | 71.5 |
| Average garbage collection | 19.1 | 20.4 | 21.0 | 35.6 | 51.6 |
| Collection efficiency | 29.5% | 30.9% | 31.2% | 51.3% | 72.2% |

Source: Naga (1999).

TABLE 5-6
INITIAL BENEFITS OF THE NAGA CITY COMPUTERIZATION PROGRAM

| Module/Activity | 1990 | 1994 | Benefit |
|--|---|--|----------------------|
| Increase in income: | | | |
| Business licensing | P8.3 million | P17.6 million | 112% increase |
| Real property tax (current) | P2.9 million | P5.1 million | 76% increase |
| Improvement in response time: | | | |
| Determination of business, real property tax due | Tax due determined after 4 hours | Tax due determined after 1 minute | A 4 hour improvement |
| Issuance of birth certificate | Certificate released after 1 week | Certificate released after 30 minutes | A 1 week improvement |
| Reduction in manpower: | | | |
| Real property tax | 9 personnel | 3 personnel | 6 personnel less |
| Payroll | 22 personnel (1 per department/ division) | 2 personnel (for all departments/ divisions) | 20 personnel less |

Source: Naga (1997c).

TABLE 5-7
ROAD INVENTORY OF NAGA CITY GOVERNMENT

| Type | (Kilometer) | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | Year 1977 | % | Year 1987 | % | Year 1996 | % |
| Concrete | 20.121 | 14.5 | 36.714 | 23.6 | 114.850 | 70.0 |
| Asphalt | 42.968 | 31.1 | 61.935 | 39.7 | 20.225 | 12.3 |
| Gravel | 49.482 | 35.8 | 53.882 | 34.6 | 20.442 | 12.5 |
| Unsurfaced | 25.766 | 18.6 | 3.348 | 2.1 | 8.553 | 5.2 |
| Total | 138.337 | 100.0 | 155.879 | 100.0 | 164.070 | 100.0 |

Source: See Table 5-5.

Note: Per cent indicates percentage of total.

where many urban poor live. Unsurfaced roads are limited to agricultural areas. Regarding drainage construction, total length of drainage systems was 21,355.9 meters as of December 1994. All had been constructed after Robredo assumed the mayorship. This means that Naga City expanded its drainage systems by an average of 3.56 kilometers annually (see Table 5-8).

Lastly, Robredo has understood the need for consultation with citizens in decision making. He frequently visits residents, and he held a plebiscite in 1993 to decide on the issues of (1) floating Naga City government bonds, (2) imposing rules and regulations on intra-city trimobiles (a means of transportation), and (3) the building of the Central Business District with the transfer of

the bus terminal from the city center to the new business center.¹⁶ Another example is the creation of the People's Council. This body enables the representatives from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to sit and participate on all boards, councils, committees, task forces, and other special bodies of the city government.¹⁷

For such performance, Robredo has received numerous awards. As of 1997 he had received one international award, twenty national awards, and six regional awards for his programs and governance of Naga City (Table 5-9).¹⁸

TABLE 5-8
MASTER FLOOD CONTROL AND DRAINAGE PROJECT
(Amount Completed as of December 1994)

| Project Phase | Total Length (Meters) | Total Cost (Peso) |
|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Phase I | 6,865.6 | 17,700,000 |
| Phase II | 14,490.3 | 10,900,000 |
| Total | 21,355.9 | 28,600,000 |

Source: See Table 5-5.

TABLE 5-9
THE LIST OF AWARDS GIVEN TO THE NAGA CITY GOVERNMENT, 1988–97

| Award/Recognition | Field of Local Governance |
|--|---|
| A. International: | |
| 1. Habitat II Top 40 World Best Practices for Naga Kaantabay sa Kauswagan | Housing and urban development |
| B. National: | |
| 1. 1997 Gawad Pamana ng Lahi (Local Government Heritage Award) | General local government management |
| 2. 1996–97 Most Outstanding City Peace and Order Council | Peace and order |
| 3. 1996 Gawad Pamana ng Lahi (Local Government Heritage Award) | General local government management |
| 4. 1996 Galing Pook Award for the Naga City Government Computerization Program (NCGCP) | Computerization, information technology |
| 5. 1996 Galing Pook Award for the Naga Early Education and Development (NEED) Program | Education |
| 6. 1996 Galing Pook Hall of Fame | Government innovations, excellence in local government management |
| 7. 1995 Galing Pook Award for Productivity Improvement Program | General local government management |
| 8. One of the country's top eight Public Employment Services Offices (PESO) in 1995 | Manpower development |
| 9. 1995 Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) Award | Health and nutrition |

TABLE 5-9 (Continued)

| Award/Recognition | Field of Local Governance |
|---|---|
| 10. 1995–96 Most Outstanding City Peace and Order Council | Peace and order |
| 11. 1995 NDCC Recognition Award as the country’s Best Institutional Outfit in Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation | Protective service and disaster management |
| 12. 1994 Galing Pook Award for the Metro Naga Development Council | Integrated area development |
| 13. 1994 Galing Pook Award for Emergency Rescue Naga | Health and protective services |
| 14. 1994 Galing Pook Award for Naga Kaantabaysa Kauswagan | Housing and urban development |
| 15. Special citation as outstanding local government unit with the most number of 1994 Galing Pook awards given by the National Selection Committee | Government innovations, excellence in local government management |
| 16. 1994 Manuel L. Quezon Memorial Award for outstanding achievement in TB control | Preventive health |
| 17. 1992–94 Outstanding LGU in Population Management | Population and development |
| C. Regional: | |
| 1. NDCC Recognition Award as Bicol’s Best Institutional Outfit in Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation | Protective service and disaster management |
| 2. NEDA Award as Most Outstanding City in Development Planning | Development planning |
| 3. Regional Winner, 1994 Cleanest and Greenest City in Bicol | Environment management |
| 4. Most Outstanding Local Government in Nutrition Program implementation | Health and nutrition |
| 5. Regional Winner, 1991 Search for the Most Outstanding Kabisig Project | Community resource mobilization |
| 6. Top local government in Population Planning and Management | Population and management |

Source: See Table 5-6.

After his three terms as mayor, he also received the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2000 for his performance.¹⁹ All of the awards are displayed in the “Hall of Fame” of the City Hall. Robredo has a so-called “propaganda group” which prepares applications for awards. In this sense, his awards are a part of his political advertising. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that his many awards are also a recognition of his significant achievements, and under his leadership Naga City experienced an increase in business activity and an expansion of economic activity (see Table 5-10).

TABLE 5-10
DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ROBREDO ADMINISTRATION

| | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. | <p>A 96 per cent increase in the number of businesses established, from 2,397 in 1988 to 4,710 in 1996.</p> <p>A 159 per cent increase in market stalls, from 697 when a fire hit the Naga City Public Market in 1987 to a combined 1,803 in the rehabilitated public market and in four satellite markets and three community markets established since 1988.</p> <p>The entry of fifteen new banks or roughly three new banks every two years since 1988, making a total of thirty-three banks as of 1996.</p> <p>A 195 per cent increase in the number of other financial institutions from twenty-two in 1988 to sixty-five in 1996.</p> <p>Eighteen hotels/motels in 1996 which was double what the city had in 1988.</p> <p>The creation of an average of 1,470 new jobs annually over the past seven years up to 1996.</p> <p>P14.97 million in socialized credit extended to 11,820 beneficiaries since 1990 under the city government's various livelihood programs.</p> <p>A total of 3,303 individuals who have benefited from the city's various employment enhancement programs.</p> <p>A 100 per cent increase in buildings construction from 185 buildings per year before 1988 to an average of 369 buildings annually over the past six years up to 1996.</p> <p>The development of a new subdivision every new year for the past eight years up to 1996.</p> <p>The establishment of four shopping malls since 1988 from none before.</p> |
|--|---|

Source: See Table 5-6.

City Governance and Socioeconomic Classes

The mayor has control over resources through the institutional powers of local government as described earlier. Moreover, Robredo has demonstrated efficient management of government to maximize resource utilization, and he has utilized these government resources in different ways in order to gain the support of the different socioeconomic classes in the city.

Urban poverty in Naga City is considerable. Robredo was successful in establishing a strong machine among the urban poor by incorporating the city government with people's organizations. The details about this machine will be discussed in the next chapter. Here we will deal with the middle class and urban capitalists.

The middle class, composed of white-collar workers and medium and small-scale businessmen, is an urban phenomenon. Naga City has a fairly considerable middle class which forms a politically important part of the electorate.²⁰ Robredo appeals to this middle class essentially in two ways. One is to participate in middle-class organizations, and the other is appealing to them by pointing to his efficient management of city government.

Robredo is an active member and a leader of the local chapter of the Couples for Christ, a group within the Catholic Church. This group has local chapters throughout the country, and its members are mainly middle class. By participating in this group, Robredo is seen as a devout Christian, and at the same time he has a lot of chances to get acquainted with middle-class residents. Robredo is also a member of the Boy Scout and the Rotary Club, which are likewise composed of middle-class residents. Being a member of such groups in itself does not necessarily assure votes, but at least it gives a favorable impression of the mayor. And these membership activities do not require the resources of the city government.

The second method of appealing to the middle class is fully connected with the city government. He keeps the city government on a sound financial footing and minimizes corruptions. He provides indivisible community-wide benefits like infrastructure services and garbage management. Robredo considers that the middle class is keen on the fair usage of the taxes that they pay. At the same time he feels that the good performance and management of government can convince the middle class to support his administration.²¹ Achieving the sound fiscal status of the city government is one of his symbols and the most appealing way to gain the trust of the middle class because it shows that the incumbent administration is not wasting their taxes. The middle class is also concerned about corruption. By showing that he is not accumulating personal wealth and is improving the administrative system by minimizing corruption among city government personnel, Robredo has sent a positive impression to the middle class. He has reinforced this by banning nightclubs in the city, and he has taken a hard stance against illegal gambling, *jueteng*, by organizing a special task force. All these moves have enabled him to win the trust of concerned middle-class citizens. Moreover, visible improvement in infrastructure and the consequent expansion of the city economy has created more business chances for the middle class.

Hence, organizations and the distribution of divisible benefits, like those directed at the urban poor, are not necessary for the middle class in Robredo's tactics. Such inducements do not cause the middle class to change its behavior.²²

There is one group in the middle class that should be looked at more specifically because of its connection with city government resources, and this is the contractors. Contractors in Naga City depend on public works since the number of private construction projects is still limited. The mayor's control over public works pushes the contractors to be a part of his political machine. There were 147 contractors that handled public works in Naga City as of 1997, and they were visible in campaigning for the mayor's party in the

1998 elections. They need to keep close ties with the incumbent administration in order to secure their public work contracts with the city government. Robredo avoids giving special favors to particular contractors. But contractors feel that cooperation during elections can bring them favorable opportunities, and such feelings encourage them to join Robredo's campaigning. The contractors certainly have benefited from the growth of the city government's finances and development of infrastructure. They too have welcomed the good performance of Robredo's city government.

Unlike the middle class, the stance of the wealthy landlords and large-scale businessmen has been ambivalent.²³ They welcome the improvements in city government management which has encouraged economic activity and increased business opportunities. The government-initiated development of the new commercial district has brought benefits to the business elite. The city government regularly holds talks with the Metro Naga Chamber of Commerce and Industry to set up schemes for furthering the economic progress of the city and trying to bring in more investment from outside. This side of Robredo's management has been applauded by the business elite.

However, the mayor's rigid tax collecting, the rise in real property taxes due to the rise in land values, and some policies like the transfer of the bus terminal from the center of the city to a suburban area has affected specific individual interests of the business elite.²⁴ The matter of taxes in particular brought harsh criticism against Robredo. The mayor had no choice but to put up a big board in one of the plazas to compare the taxes of Naga City with those of other cities during the 1998 elections to show that the taxes in Naga City were not heavy. The conflict of indivisible interests and individual interests within the business elite makes their stance toward Robredo complex.

As for the urban poor, their support of Robredo has been due not so much to his performance as to his political organization, in other word, the mayor's political machine, which has been managed with Robredo's full control over the resources of the government. The next chapter deals with this political machine.

Notes

1 Williams (1981) also argued that central-local relations are not centralized in the Philippines, even during the Marcos regime.

2 See Rōyama (1943, p. 101–2) for this aspect of American colonial rule.

3 For details, see Legaspi (1995).

4 The *Liga ng mga Barangay* consists of the *punong barangays* (barangay chiefs) in

- the city, while the Sangguniang Kabataan is made up of youths who are below twenty-one years old.
- 5 Local Government Code of 1991, Sec. 458 (a).
 - 6 From the author's observations.
 - 7 The Civil Service Commission issues rules regarding casual employment. The total amount of salaries for casual employment should be below 45 per cent of total personnel expenditures. Naga City observes this condition.
 - 8 All local governments in the Philippines are classified into six classes in accordance with their revenue scale; first is the best performing, while sixth is the least.
 - 9 The share of internal revenue allotment is computed automatically based on the ranking of the local government (province, city, municipality, and barangay) and the formula of population (50 per cent), land area (25 per cent), and equal sharing (25 per cent) (Local Government Code of 1991, Sec. 285). There is no leeway for politicians or bureaucrats to intervene in the computation.
 - 10 Besides these two categories of expenditures, the mayor's office also has its own funds under the item of "non-office" in the budget. These funds accounted for 28 per cent of the total appropriations of the city government in 1997 (Naga 1997b, p. 42). These funds are directly under the mayor's jurisdiction, though not all are discretionary. Some portions are used for fixed purposes like repayment of interest on loans.
 - 11 As an example, Robredo mentioned an occasion when President Ramos visited Naga City and provided funds for a water system when the city was suffering from a serious water shortage. Interview with Jesse M. Robredo, August 19, 1997; see also "Robredo to Appeal for Lower Power Rates," *Bicol Tribune*, September 18, 1992.
 - 12 The relations between president and mayor are not based on political party, but on those between two persons. Robredo expressed such relations by saying, "My loyalty is not with the party. Loyalty is with the president." This expression became clear when Robredo did not support Lakas-NUCD congressional candidate Celso Baguio in the 1995 elections. Interview with Jesse M. Robredo, August 19, 1997.
 - 13 For details on the pork barrel system, see Armando Doronila, "Disguised Pork Barrel," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, July 29, 1996; and Parreño (1998).
 - 14 Interview with Jaime DLS. Jacob, city councilor, at City Hall, Naga City, April 4, 1997. Regarding Andaya's huge discretion over pork barrel funds, see "1996 Congressional Initiative Allocation: House of Representatives," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 16, 1996. According to this report, Andaya had a total of 3,695,764,000 pesos for allotting through the Congressional Initiative Allocation in 1996, which was more than 100 times bigger than that for Rep. Leopoldo San Buenaventura of second district of Camarines Sur. The amount was the third largest in the legislature.
 - 15 For the details of the Productivity Improvement Program, see Naga (n.d.).
 - 16 See "Comelec Resolution No. 2591," *Malaya*, July 16, 1993; and Aquilino Q.

- Pimentel “Mayor Robredo Shows Naga How to Do It,” *Manila Times*, May 5, 1994.
- 17 NGO representatives are authorized to observe, vote, and participate in the deliberation, conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of city government programs/projects/activities; propose legislation and participate and vote at the committee level of the City Council; and generally represent the people of Naga in matters where their participation is required or called for (Naga 1997a). See also Santos (1998); and Saligan/Cadenet Office (n.d.).
 - 18 Most of the national awards are Gantimpalang Pang-lingkod Pook (Galing Pook) Awards given by the Local Government Academy and the Asian Institute of Management with the Ford Foundation as the major sponsor. This number excludes the awards given to Jesse Robredo personally.
 - 19 See “Ex-Bicol Mayor Wins Ramon Magsaysay Award,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, July 26, 2000; Robert J. A. Basilio Jr., “Five of Asia’s Best: The Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation Has Added Five Asian Leaders to Its Roster,” *Business World*, July 28–29, 2000; and Arnold S. Tenorio, “Politics: The Outsider—Jesse Robredo Shows That Government Can Still Matter and He Has an RM Award to Prove It,” *Business World*, September 1–2, 2000.
 - 20 The role of the middle class in politics is gaining the attention of academics in the Philippines. See Rivera (2000) and Bautista (1999).
 - 21 Interview with Jesse M. Robredo, August 19, 1997.
 - 22 Through his experience, Robredo pointed out that electoral campaigning in the subdivisions where the middle class resides does not result in increased votes. According to him, his party constantly wins 80 to 90 per cent of the votes in such subdivisions. He said the middle class does not change its voting behavior because of campaign tactics such as personal visits, which he uses for the urban poor. Interview with Jesse M. Robredo, August 19, 1997.
 - 23 Interviews with anonymous business leaders.
 - 24 Transfer of the bus terminal affected the business establishments located near the old terminal. They lost the convenience of transportation as well as business from passengers. Realizing such repercussion, Robredo used a referendum, as mentioned above, for the final decision to secure legitimacy for the policy.