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POWER, WATER AND FUEL MUST BE GOVERNMENT-OWNED

By: **ELIAS O. BAQUERO**

POWER, water, and fuel must be owned and controlled by the government because these involve national security and the welfare of the Filipino people.

Former Cebu City Councilor Erik Espina, a radio, television, and newspaper personality made this statement adding that as always, the private sector is for huge profit to the detriment of the people's welfare.

“Water is a national resource of the country. The owner of this God-given water is the people and shall be managed by the government,” said Espina, a reserve general of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

He said that what happened in the Philippines in the past decades was that managing power, water and fuel was dependent on the economic policy of a nation, and the line of thinking of leaders.

“When the Philippines liberalized after Marcos, the past economic managers believed that the economy would rise if water, power and fuel are privatized. They were mistaken. These are infrastructures

that the government should have control over,” Espina said.

Privatization of vital government facilities has made millions of Filipinos suffer, while making some businessmen super rich. They even asked for refund from the consuming public their expenses by incorporating national and local taxes, franchise fees, and systems losses in the utility bills. Congress even allowed it through a “pass-on” provision of the law.

This is also the reason why President Rodrigo Duterte is livid at the so-called oligarchs who own Maynilad and Manila Water which took over the National Water and Sewerage Authority (NAWASA) in Metro Manila.

NAWASA, which was hugely improved by then President Ferdinand E. Marcos, had distributed cheap water to the people until Maynilad Water and Manila Water took over making people's lives miserable by letting them pay unreasonable water rates.

In an interview, former Senator Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos said he was surprised when they came home from the United

States in 1989 that NAWASA was privatized by the government of then President Corazon C. Aquino.

On power, the electricity rates consistently went up when the government privatized the National Power Corporation (NPC) which previously serviced the people efficiently during the Marcos presidency.

As a matter of fact, it was Marcos who created the National Electrification Administration (NEA) and electric cooperatives like Cebu Electric Cooperatives (CEBECO). Marcos ordered the supply of power to electric cooperatives through the NPC's Transmission Corporation (TRANSCO).

However, the administration of then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo privatized TRANSCO first to Henry Sy Jr. who named it as National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP). Now, NGCP is controlled by the Chinese communist government.

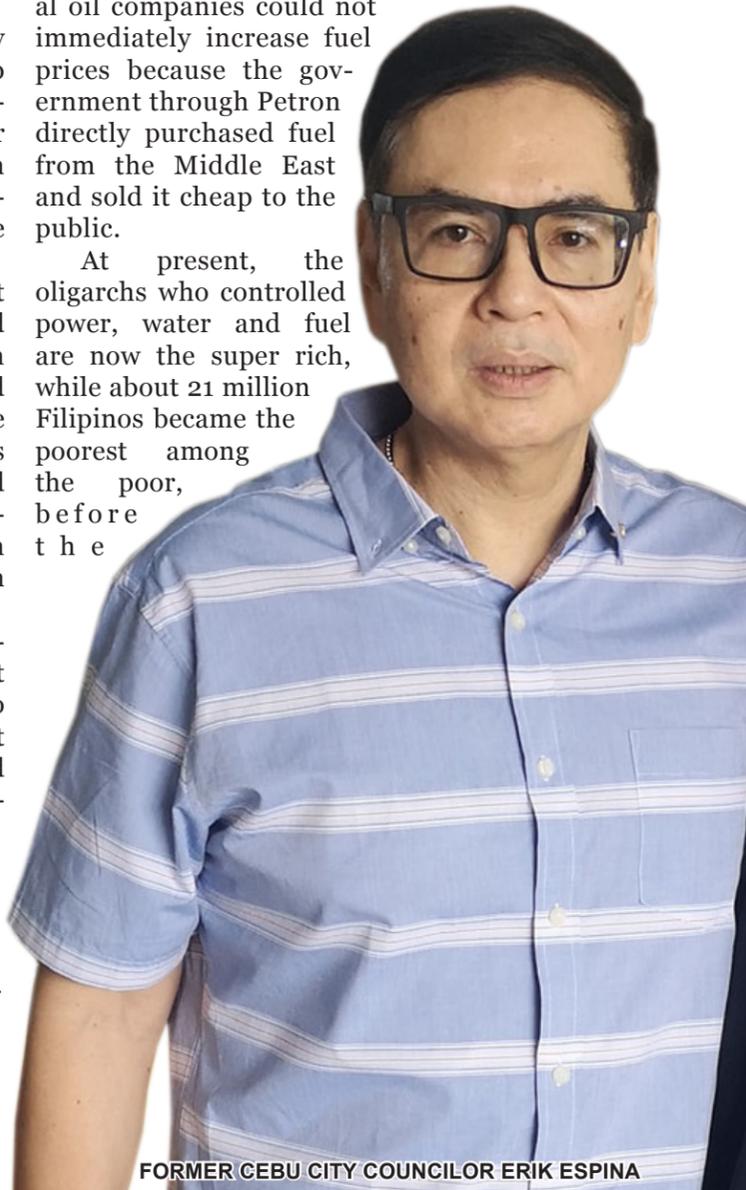
Then came the administration of then President Fidel V. Ramos who privatized the government-owned Petron Corporation and reportedly got fat commission, to the disadvantage of the af-

flicted masses.

During Marcos time, the greedy multi-national oil companies could not immediately increase fuel prices because the government through Petron directly purchased fuel from the Middle East and sold it cheap to the public.

At present, the oligarchs who controlled power, water and fuel are now the super rich, while about 21 million Filipinos became the poorest among the poor, before the

Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19) pandemic.



FORMER CEBU CITY COUNCILOR ERIK ESPINA