

Keynote Speech during the National Association of General Managers of Electric Cooperatives Convention, Butuan City, June 9, 2005 by Vincent S. Pérez

“Are You a Boss or Are You a Leader?”

To our host, a neophyte in public service like me, who has proven himself in terms of the values that he has stood for, I'd like to acknowledge our host Governor Erlpe John Amante.

To the person who invited me with a letter which was faxed to me while I was still in the United States, and whose invitation I could not turn down that's why I'm here tonight, Nagemec President Decs Judilla, how are you?

To Secretary Paking Silva, NEA Administrator Edith Bueno, the officers of NAGMEC, presidents and general managers of the Rural Electric Cooperatives of the Philippines, ladies and gentlemen, it's nice to be here this evening.

Wonderful Memories Together

It's quite sentimental watching that surprise video because it reminded me that my job as Energy Secretary has been so intertwined with you. I have managed to travel throughout the country, in far-flung places, whether to Batanes to inaugurate the wind hybrid with GM Gato, or all the way to Tawi-Tawi to do solar electrification with the Tawi-Tawi Electric Coop, or whether watching a parade in Lanao del Sur where all of you volunteered to help a sister Electric Coop. I'm pleased that we have a brave man who have joined us in this fellowship, General Prejido, who returned from a comfortable life in the US to come back and heed the call of President Arroyo, good evening sir!

And all the wonderful places I have gotten to visit. Of course, the one place that they always criticize us for visiting too often, Aklan with GM Eric Bucoy. Hi Eric. Or even for a short visit in Bohol with GM Caloy. Or even visiting places with President Arroyo like Basilan.

All the wonderful memories I've had, whether fellowships in Toledo with GM Ed Satina, or inaugurating plants in Iloilo with GM Fred and the other GMs of Iloilo, Mon and Gil. Or wonderful dances that I had to perform, like dancing with the Manobo tribe in the mountains of Bukidnon while inaugurating solar power there. All of those were wonderful memories.

But intertwined with these wonderful memories were common challenges, common crises that we all had to fight. Nothing unites and bonds people more than when we are together in a crisis, whether we're together dealing with outside forces like political pressure in Butuan, or dealing with catastrophes like typhoons that affected our coops in Aurora and Quezon. Or this fellowship tonight which we have had many of these over the last four years, these are the wonderful moments I've had as Energy Secretary.

I admire the Challenges of a General Manager of an Electric Coop

The job I've had was certainly multi-faceted with all the other things that an Energy Secretary has to do, but the movement I felt most passionate about, when my shoulder felt so much lighter and my heart felt so much warmer, was when I was dealing with you, the Rural Cooperative movement.

While we may be sitting in the ivory towers of Makati and Taguig, you are right there on the frontline. It is you that has to deal with the electric consumer. I, therefore, sympathize with your challenges. I sympathize with your responsibilities. It is not like the job of a general manager of a corporation. You have to motivate, of course, your employees. You have to deal with a regulatory body like ERC, a supervisory body like NEA. But also you have to deal with public officials, your consumers and other stakeholders in your franchise area. That is a difficult job. It is not easy. And that's why I admire each and every one of you.

The job of a General Manager, we all know, is so critical in the management of an Electric Coop. I think it is fair to say, Father Paking, that if we have a very good competent General

Manager, you have a very well-run and efficient Electric Coop. And the inverse is the same to some extent. So the fate of the Electric Coop that you manage depends on you. That's why we spend so much time and so much energy listening for so many hours to Secretary Paking and interact with Administrator Edith because we are always trying to find the best practice in managing Electric Coops. We don't have to go outside this hall to find those answers, the answers are right here among us. It is just a matter of sharing with one another lessons learned, mistakes made, success stories. It's all here in this hall.

Are you a Boss or are you a Leader?

Therefore, I want to share with you a few tips on what it takes to be a General Manager. Let me ask you, are you a boss or are you a leader?

A boss would say: *"I did this, I reduced the systems loss"*. But a leader would say: *"We did this, we reduced the systems loss"*.

A boss would create fear in a staff. *"Pag ikaw nagkamali, lagot ka, sipa ka. If you make a mistake, you're out!"* But a leader would build confidence, would say something like: *"I'm sure you could do it. Kulang lang sa praktis pero kaya mo 'yan. Just a little practice and you can do it"*.

A boss puts blame: *"He was the culprit, asleep on the job. Natutulog. Siya'y may kasalanan"*. But a leader would say: *"We have a problem, let's fix it together"*.

A boss relies on his authority: *"Ako boss n'yo, sundan n'yo ako. I'm your boss. Just follow my orders"*. But a leader relies on cooperation: *"I need you. I cannot do it without you. Help me"*.

The same way I recruited Father Silva.

A boss usually knows how to get his work done: *"Kaya n'yo 'yan. Ngayon gawin n'yo, kung may problema tawagin n'yo ako, ayusin ko. I can do that. Just do this. If you encounter a problem, just call me and I will sort it out myself"*. But a leader would not just do that but actually

try to develop the career of his or her subordinate: *"Tuturuan kita gawin n'yo ito. If you do well maybe after six months we could promote you"*. That's a leader.

A boss would allow work to feel routine: *"Magdusa ka, gawain mo na 'yan". Bakit? "Dinaan ko rin 'yan. Pag nagawa mo na 'yang draft, limang taon baka pwede kitang ilipat at i-promote. I also had to work my butt off. So you too have to go through the same ordeal."* While a leader would make work interesting: *"Pag-aralan mo muna ito. You do well, excel in it no matter how mundane it might be, do it in an uncommon way"*. That is a leader.

A boss would look at problems as a disaster that will bring about the destruction of his coop. But a leader will look at a problem as crisis that can be turned into an opportunity to unite his staff and hopefully make it an opportunity for growth. That is a leader.

Lastly, a boss gives directions: *"Do this, kayo naman, do that. Ikaw bahala d'yan, kayo ganyan. You take care of this job, I will take care of that."* But the true leader creates a vision and takes action. He says: *"We want to be the best performing Electric Coop in Mindanao. How do we get there?"* Or he wants to turnaround LASURECO so that in five years his rating would be B+. "How do we get there?" That is a true leader.

Visualize and Taking Action

We need to think in order to create. We need to visualize where we want to go. But vision without any action is the same as dreaming. Action without any vision is just like spinning wheels. So you need a vision together with action in order to move on. That is what a leader does.

Any vision for your Electric Coop? Any vision for yourself? Just take action on that vision. Don't let it just remain a dream. That is what leadership is all about.

Make a Difference

But tonight I want to challenge you to try to go one more step beyond that. I want you not only to visualize and dream, I want you not only to take action on your vision and dream, but I want you to try to make a difference.

Make a difference. Yes, you want to be the best General Manager, be a multi-award winning coop, but that may not be enough. You need to make a difference. Look within your own community. How can you help your community? It doesn't have to be related to rural electrification. You may want to sponsor some students to go to school, get some out of school youth to be an on-the-job trainee.

Make an impact. That will distinguish you because when you finally would have retired, (and I hope you stay involved as long as Father Paking has been involved in his life), but when someday you decide to retire and you look back into your life and you know that you have made a difference, then you'd know you have lived your life to the fullest.

We have Unfinished Business

There is a reason I'm here tonight. I could be in the U.S. already, retired, playing golf. But no, I still have some unfinished business.

Sometimes you wonder in life why you end up being involved with somebody or end up in a particular situation. Sometimes we don't know why that happens. Would I have known that when I was in U.P., I was actively involved in student organizations and I asked a professor to be my adviser, that someday that professor would become the President of the Philippines and she would invite me to join the Cabinet. Twenty-five years ago I didn't know that. But perhaps there was fate waiting to happen and destiny waiting to unfold. So why is it that we're together here? Why is it that I ended up being your Energy Secretary for four years? We still may not know the

answer. Not yet. But perhaps maybe part of that answer is that we're here to try to make a difference. That is what I'm wondering why we're here together. Perhaps we still have a mission that we have to fulfill.

My Passion is Rural Electrification

I would like to let you know that I have accepted a position left vacant by current Trade Secretary Johnny Santos. In the year 2000 former Energy Secretary Mario Tiaoqui organized a foundation called Foundation for Rural Electrification and Economic Development – FREED. They did some electrification in Davao and in Antique. Secretary Santos asked me if I could assume the Chairmanship from him. I said, why not, but provided the Directors are also committed with the same passion that I have for rural electrification. That will be my single advocacy, my dear friends, Rural Electrification.

We need Passion to Enjoy What We Do

And that means we'll be working together again. At least I don't have to inspect gasoline stations anymore. I don't have to attend press conferences anymore. I'll have more free time doing what I love to do. Because when you do what you love then work doesn't feel like work anymore. That's why I like to thank Administrator Edith for always emphasizing the word "passion". Because if we put passion in our work, if we like what we do no matter how difficult it might be, work becomes fun. Yes, it's challenging. Yes, it's difficult. But it's actually fun if you put passion into what you do.

I thank the President for having appointed me as Secretary of Energy. I could have been Trade Secretary or Environment Secretary, but instead I fell into the lap of the Energy Department. Instead I had the opportunity to meet each and every one of you. So that means we still have a destiny yet to unfold together that is still unfinished. So I'd like to devote the next few years to

helping you make a difference. We need to leave a legacy behind. And I'd like to leave that legacy working hand in hand with each one of you.

So to NAGMEC I thank you for inviting me this evening. This is my first official public appearance since I step down three months ago. I've chosen carefully because I feel if there's any group that I want to be involved with in the future, its right here in this hall. Thank you.