

THE CABINET MEMBER AS PUBLIC SERVANT

SALVADOR M. ENRIQUEZ, JR.

*Secretary, Department of Budget and Management
Malacañang, Manila*

On 12 July 1995, Secretary of Budget and Management Salvador M. Enriquez, Jr. delivered a speech during the 17th Annual Scientific Meeting of the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST). The meeting carried the theme "Ethics and Politics of Public Service" and was held at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC). This is an attempt to capture the main text of the Secretary's speech; the delivery was, of course, more candid and spontaneous.

The NAST invitation for me to speak today on the subject The Cabinet Member as Public Servant took me by surprise. First, because I think this is a rare, if not the first, occasion in our country that a group of scientists and technology experts gather to discuss the theme "Ethics and Politics of Public Service". Second, because this elite group chose me as the speaker on the topic; perhaps, with the impression – and rightly, I hope – that I represent a political but ethical cabinet member.

Let me say that, more than this feeling of surprise, is my deep appreciation for the group's initiative. I used to picture a scientist as one dressed in a white gown and immersed in his work in the laboratory. I am glad our scientists have come out of that world to be real members of society.

How, then would I discuss the Cabinet Member as Public Servant within the context of ethics and politics?

Let me start with some definitions.

There are a number of meanings for ethics and politics; I chose the following which I think best fit our purpose.

Webster defines *ethics* as a group of principles governing an individual's conduct. It can also refer to the study of these standards of conduct. *Politics* is that branch of ethics which deals with the social organisms as they play distinct roles in the organization, regulation, and administration of a state.

One's ethics can be largely influenced or dictated by one's history – his birth, growth, struggles, pains, etc.

In my case, what I have been through in life (and they were a lot) formed my ethics, morals, or virtues. My wealth of experiences has strengthened my character, expanded my views and perspectives, raised my hopes, and sharpened my vision. They have molded me into one who philosophizes about life – that one is obliged to grow – grow somehow, develop economically, intellectually, spiritually, or in

some other useful way – so that once he has grown, he begins to lead and develop into one who advocates honesty, industry, creativity, prudence, and nationalism.

What are these values?

The five virtues I uphold and promote are: Honesty, Industry, Creativity, Prudence or Frugality, and Nationalism.

Honesty is one virtue which should be basic in everyone. Honesty of the individuals makes for developed societies. It is the basis of faith in oneself and in others, the kind that makes people rely on each another. Honest people work with one another, together, and collectively achieve better results and efficiently produce better products.

Let me focus on the rest of the virtues.

It is my assumption that all of us aim for the good life. The *good life* is a state characterized by high productivity; a condition where there is abundance of goods and services, where each and everyone enjoys freedom from scarcity and want. It is my dream that we all experience that good life.

To attain this, an important virtue that must be developed is *industry*. This virtue should become part of our values system. Our being industrious should be expressed in practical and beneficial terms. When we talk of values, we mean pesos. To make more pesos, one has to be able to produce more. To produce more, one has to work more. We want our country to industrialize, to produce more. Industrialization is a derivation of the word "industry". Industry means "sipag". An industrialized country is the reward for industrious people.

Creativity means that we need to constantly think of new ideas and products; to innovate and introduce "firsts" -- materials, equipment, designs, techniques, technologies. This is basically the role of science and technology, its research and development. It is about time that this sector think of new improvements to spur development. Creativity, however, should consider tying up with industry for application. This essentially means that things created should be "translatable" to products for commercial purposes and at commercial levels. This is again thinking in terms of the peso sign.

Prudence or frugality means efficient use of our resources. In simple terms, it is spending less than we earn. Within the perspective of the national economy, it can be interpreted to mean fiscal health. At present, our outstanding debt has reached 1.1 trillion pesos. It will take us several generations to pay for these debts. For years, we have been operating on a deficit budget which tends to aggravate our condition of liability. We, in the DBM, thought that something ought to be done soon. We are happy to have been able to find the formula for a surplus budget last year. We intend to do it again this year and in the years to come. The President is proud of this achievement. This indicates that we are catching up in the development process.

Nationalism essentially means putting the interest of our country and countrymen first. It is being Filipino, first and foremost. In more concrete and realistic terms, this is doing best our work for and responsibility to our country.

Nationalism means not only love of country. One has to have faith in, be proud of, and be willing to fight for and even die for, his country. He cares for his country, its endowments, its services, its people, because he believes that it is this country that provides him the good life!

Having discussed the ethics dimensions, let me now go to *politics*.

My political philosophy and strategy is to encourage other sectors of our society to actively contribute to the development endeavor. Government should work with business and the non-government organizations. They are partners in this responsibility.

My role as a cabinet member and public servant will only have value if I am able to impart to others the virtues and the philosophy I believe in and live with. To this, a question I ask myself, and which I want you to ask of yourselves is: "Was I able to influence others to do his part well?"

The way I was raised, the of kind education I had, through the rough and tumble I experienced, describe the ethical dimensions of my person. What I have seen and felt around me – the poverty of my neighbors, the problems of the society I see everyday – and the aspirations I have for this country and people, sum up my politics.

This is the kind of cabinet member and public servant that I want to be. . . and which I believe I am.

Thank you and good day.

