

CDI PARTY LAUNCHES ANTI-CORRUPTION DRIVE

Manila, January 29, 2001



Lakas NUCD-UMDP national chairman Jose de VENECIA (*left*) today unveiled a major political and electoral reform measure "to eliminate turncoats or *balimbings* in the country's biggest political party, bring about a return to the two-party system, and to set an example in Asia."

He hoped the initiative would set the stage for "what could be a revolutionary change in the present chaotic multi-party system" before this year's mid-term May 14 elections - a system which has resulted in the election of minority presidents since 1992.

De Venecia, twice elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, and co-founder of Lakas in 1992, said each of Lakas more than 17,500 candidates in the May elections would be asked to sign a pledge to reject the "politics of turncoatism," under the "Contract with Lakas NUCD-UMDP and Covenant with the Filipino People."

"It is the politics of balimbing that unconscionably puts self-interest above the genuine goals of public office for the common good," Guingona, Alvarez, and Executive Director Jose Rufino told a press briefing at the Lakas Headquarters in Makati.

President Gloria ARROYO, the party's titular leader, former President Fidel RAMOS, party president Sen. Teofisto GUINGONA, Secretary-General Rep. Heherson ALVAREZ, new House Speaker Feliciano BELMONTE, executive Vice-president, and Executive Director Joey RUFINO, Presidential Legal Adviser Avelino CRUZ, chairman of the Arbitration and Screening Committee, and co-chairman Defense Secretary Eduardo ERMITA, are backing the party's reform initiative.

Guingona and Alvarez are being considered for nomination to the vice-presidency following the assumption to office of President Gloria Macapagal ARROYO, Lakas' titular leader.

The first two party officials who signed the contract and covenant were Rep.

Apolinario Lozada (Negros Occ.) and Legaspi City Mayor Imelda Roces. Some 30 other official congressional candidates are signing the contract this morning.

"We realize we have done some party-raiding in the past," de Venecia said." But today

we wash our roles clean. With new President Arroyo, we are starting new politics and a new

moral order."

De Venecia, also Vice-President of the Christian Democratic People's Parties International (CDI), expressed the hope that the reform measure would trigger a similar move by other political parties, notably the new opposition that once supported resigned President Joseph ESTRADA.

"Our country has suffered so much because of the balimbing system. This historic measure will put an end to this vicious political circus that has sapped the strength of our

political parties and rendered principle and commitment virtually meaningless in our political environment," Guingona said.

De Venecia said the Lakas NUCD will this year launch a series of political and electoral reform measures to "dramatically reduce corruption in the Philippines and Asia" and keep drug lords and gambling syndicates from influencing the results of elections through money politics and manipulation of candidates, and so that sons and daughters of poor families can compete and win in elections.

The Contract with Lakas and the Covenant with the Filipino People reads in part:

"I reject the politics of patronage, mendicancy and greed that has engendered crass opportunism and a heartless and mindless pursuit of power, privilege and class for its own sake.

"Because I believe in our Party's vision and ideals, I commit to campaign hard and work for the victory of the Party's candidates in the coming May 2001 elections. And I dedicate myself to the high purpose of public office and service and devotion to its duties and tasks.

"Finally, as part of the party's major program of political reforms, I reject the politics of turncoatism--the politics of the balimbing that unconscionably puts self-interest above the genuine goals of public office for the common good."

Heavy sanctions are readied against those who violate the covenant topped by expulsion from the party "with dishonor and disgrace" and resignation and loss of the elective or appointive office the party member may be holding at the time of his defection to another party, de Venecia explained.

The covenant provides further: "If I should change political parties, I would immediately relinquish any public position that I may be holding in an elective or appointive capacity."

The covenant and contract became a major pillar of a program of political reforms the Lakas leadership adopted soon after de Venecia's brainchild had gained unanimous endorsement from delegates to the 1st International Conference of Asian Political Parties held in Manila last September 17-20.

It was also the first meeting in the world of ruling and minority parties from 21 nations from Japan to Pakistan, organized by CDI and Lakas NUCD.

With the adoption by Lakas of the covenant and contract with the Filipino people, de Venecia expressed hope that the "politics of balimbings" would be significantly reduced and totally eradicated before the national elections in May 2004.

He said the ruling party in the small city state of Singapore requires members of parliament to resign their seats if they leave the party.