

ELECTRIFICATION

Light for the rural areas

"Let there be light" may well be the cry of some 30 million Filipinos who have never been served by the magic of electricity.

At present, only 10.8 million or 28.5 percent of the country's 40 million population are served by electricity. It used to be only 22.5 percent in 1969 when the National Electrification Administration was organized. Of these, 3.5 million or roughly 35 percent reside in the Greater Manila area and 2.7 million live in other urban communities. This means only about 4.6 million living in the rural areas have electric services or 13 out of every 15 families of the 70 percent of the population who reside in the barrios do not enjoy these services.

While the figures seem to be insurmountable, the situation is not that gloomy. Light is beginning to emerge from the tunnel. The NEA, which replaced the defunct Electrification Administration (EA), is now making major strides toward emancipating the rural folk from age-old darkness. Its three-year program of establishing 98 electric cooperatives in the barrios amounting to P600 million

is about to be met.

Recently, 43 municipalities in five provinces in eastern and central Visayas were provided with light. Installation of power plants of thermal and internal combustion types have already been completed.

The 43 new power plants are located in Culaba, Naval, Kawayan, Almorá, Cabucogyan, Bilián, Cabilman, Tolosa, Dulag, La Paz, Julita, Mayonga, Burauen, Tabon-Tabon, Patrana and Sta Fe, all in Leyte, and Masanin, Malitbog, Macrohon, Padre Burgos and Bonto in Southern Leyte. In Central Visayas, the areas electrified are Barili, Dumanjug, Ronda, Malbaloc, Badian, Alegera and Alcantara, all in Cebu; Antiguera, Baliuhan, Calape, Catigbian, Clarin, Leon, Sagbayan, San Isidro and Tubigan in Bohol; Mabinay, Manjuyod, Sindoy, Ayungon, Tayasan and Jimalalod in Negros Oriental.

Other Project feasibility studies — including site selection, preliminary design, plant costs, revenue and expenses — have already been undertaken in 17 municipalities of the three Samar provinces. Similar studies are

also being undertaken in other parts of the country.

During its eight-year existence (1962-69) the EA only put up 108 physical plants with an aggregate capacity of 17,000 kilowatts, mostly of the 30-60 KW types that hardly encouraged the establishment of industries. The EA program called for the electrification of at least 40 percent of the country at an estimated cost of P750 for a 20-year period, or at the rate of P36 million a year. But during the entire period of its existence, it got only P36 million for the eight-year period.

Even before the advent of the New Society, President Marcos placed the electrification program high on the list of priority projects and emphasis on an area coverage basis. Instead of each barrio or town establishing their own independent power plants, the NEA encouraged the establishment of plants on an area coverage basis. This means an electric cooperative should be set up to service five to 10 municipalities with 100,000 to 200,000 people on a 24-hour basis. After the broad based cooperatives are formed, the government steps in to provide technical assistance and loans.

Of the P600 million allotted for the three-year program, \$60 million represents foreign loans and P240 million as peso components. This excludes the \$40 million earmarked by Japanese

reparations payments for the NEA.

Today, there are 1,012 plants with a combined total power of 2.7 million kilowatts derived from thermal, hydro and internal combustion engine types. About 75.3 percent of this are provided by privately-owned power systems and 24.7 percent by government-owned plants.

Despite these increases much remains to be done to achieve the goal of total electrification of the country by 1989. While 63 chartered cities have their own plants only 750 out of the 1,421 towns in the country have electric service. Of the 15,647 barrios, only 2,790 enjoy its blessings.

But the major aim of this all-out government effort is not so much to afford the rural populace with light as to spur their economic development. NEA planners foresee the establishment of major industries in the rural areas once the electrification program goes into high gear. Among the other benefits to be derived are the cheap operation of irrigation systems and processing of farm products, expansion of electrical, electronics and appliances market, effective dissemination of information and faster promotion of educational growth.

The long-range effects of all these chain reactions will be the rise of the middle class and, consequently, the narrowing of the gap between the rich and the poor.

MISS UNIVERSE

The second time around for RP

With tears that blurred the air-conditioned limousine, the ermine coat, the appliances and the \$10,000 in cash that go with the title, Maria Margarita Moran of the Philippines reigned over 61 international beauties to become the 1973 Miss Universe.

Maria Margarita or "Mergie," could only say, "I feel like crying," and after crying "I feel wonderful. They have made me the most beautiful. But I feel everyone is beautiful. . . . Let's just say I was lucky."

Meanwhile, 1966 Miss Universe Margaretta Arvidson of Sweden was saying, "I think Miss Philippines is a beautiful Miss Universe. She has got poise and personality." Ginger Rogers, Horst Bucholz and Pierre Aumont, looking for beauty, poise and intelligence, saw these in Margie. A Greek jeweller, losing himself to the new world beauty, gifted her with a turquoise white and gold necklace and a number of small diamonds.

Mergie, still half-dazed, could not give any of the "immediate plans" reporters were asking for. She said, "I have to go to bed with the thought and I'll dream about it. Now the only thing I know is that I will travel."

Back home, Mr. Francis Moran, 44, vice president of Bancom Philippines and, last July 22, father to Miss Universe, was entertaining newsmen with a cool "I knew she'd make it." In another part of the Moran house in Mandabuyong, daughter Lulette was on the phone telling newsmen her father "never gave her permission" in the first place. Rushing to doorbells that buzzed the whole day after the wire services announced "Maria Moran's victory," the other Moran children — Franchot, Mikey, Eggy, Sebastian, Martin and Paul — took turns with the thank-yous to well-wishers, known and anonymous. Mrs. Rosario Roxas-Moran, who had always called eldest child Margie "sweetheart," was keeping kitchen stoves hot and rooms warm for the



Miss Moran: 'Most attractive asset, greatest attraction'

relatives and friends who thought a ring was not enough.

"Sweetheart," the family tells, is a normal girl of 19, a Business Administration student at Maryknoll College, a pelota buff, a jazz fanatic, a siopao and siomai addict and all Chinese dishes besides. Well-tempered, gutsy, mild-mannered and responsible, Margie hates "hypocrites" in any language — whether in her fluent Spanish, English and Tagalog or in her smattering of French.

Of her \$10,000 prize money,

Mergie said, and must have given father Francis a few soft moments, "I like counting money. My father is a banker. I would buy a house with a garden and live by myself." Although the next words from his daughter must have given Mr. Moran a few uncomfortable moments of competition, "I will invest it. I also want to become a banker, maybe the Onassis of the Philippines."

In an interview in Athens, Greece, the new Miss Universe was saying, "I believe women are equal to men

everywhere in the world and the Philippines is not an exception. As a matter of fact, we in the Philippines have always given women a special place of importance."

Margarita's answers were doing the Philippines proud. Secretary Jose Aspiras of the Department of Tourism cabled her in Athens, "(Your) victory confirms yet again our feeling that the people are the Philippines' most attractive assets and greatest attraction. (You have) helped place the Philippines on the map far more indelibly than our breathtaking sunset and spectacular scenery can hope to and faster than our attractive investment climate can ever do.

The Secretary must have been thinking of Margie and predecessors: Gloria Diaz, 1969 Miss Universe; Gemma Cruz-Araneta, 1964 Miss International; Aurora Pijuan-Manotoc, 1970 Miss International; Maria Rita "Baby" Santiago, 1968 Queen of the Pacific; Nelia Sancho, 1971 Queen of the Pacific.

One international news agency was auditing, for every 35.6 square miles (57.06 square kilometers) and 528,000 inhabitants in the Philippines, there was one international beauty queen. It recalled: Armi Kuesela of Finland, 1953 and the first Miss Universe who married Filipino businessman Virgilio Hilario; Stella Marquez of Columbia, 1962 Miss International who married businessman Jorge Araneta; and Angela Filmer of Malaysia, 1965 Miss Asia who married businessman Jose Faustino.

But for Margarita Moran, the highest tribute was a message from the President of the Philippines and the First Lady: "You bring honor to your country and we are genuinely proud of you. Our warmest congratulations."

Mergie herself had said, "I am happy. This is a great moment for my country and myself."