There are many people who I consider my mentors and they all had some influence in the person I am today. For the purpose of this essay; however, I will name one person who had impressed on me the importance of not being bull-headed while holding a high position in the government. This person is no other than the former Prime Minister of the Philippines, Cesar E. A. Virata.

Prime Minister Virata was my boss when he was the Secretary of Finance and the Chairman of the Monetary Board of the Central Bank of the Philippines when I rejoined the government in 1971. This was after my stint as a tax economist in the International Monetary Fund in Washington D.C. As one who occupied a most prestigious position in the Philippine Government, Prime Minister Virata is the most humble person I know. He was accessible to his staff, no matter how lowly their positions were, including myself. When asked why he did not possess the arrogance and air that people of his position did, he said, “It is generally difficult for people who have occupied high positions in government to attune to private life when they reenter the private sector.” How true it is, when we see so many former high government officials who had become so accustomed to the adulation and perks when they occupied high offices that they continue to act arrogantly and demand the attention they once had.

The words of the Prime Minister are always a reminder for those of us who are blessed and have the opportunity to serve the government in high positions. The lesson is deeply ingrained in my being.
Cesar E. A. Virata
Former Philippine Prime Minister

Juanita Amatong is a former Secretary of Finance and currently a Monetary Board Member of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.