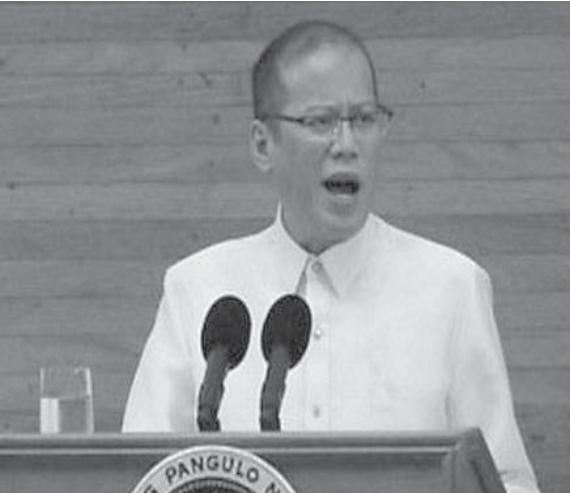




ANG TUNAY NA KALAGAYAN NG BANSA SA ISANG TAON NG GOBYERNONG AQUINO

Ang isyung ito ng Masa ay inilabas sa okasyon ng ikalawang SONA (State of the Nation Address) ni Pangulong Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III. Minamarkahan ng Sona ngayon ang isang-taong panunungkulan ni Aquino bilang bagong presidente ng bansa. Dahil dito, inilimbag namin ang mga isyung may kinalaman sa performance ng gobyernong Aquino sa nagdaang isang taon.

Nariyan ang isyu hinggil sa Philippine Development Plan (PDP) ng Pangulo. Ang PDP ang programa ng gobyerno sa loob ng anim na taon (2011-2016), at sa gayo’y nagpapakita ng vision, target, estratehiya at pamamaraan ng gobyerno para isulong ang kaunlaran ng bansa.



May mahihita ba ang masa sa PDP ni PNoy? Sa aming pag-aaral ang PDP ay walang pinag-iba sa PDP ng dating Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Pagpapatuloy lamang ito ng neo-liberal na patakaran ng gobyerno. Basahin

ang artikulo sa dakong ibaba.

Narito rin ang isyu hinggil sa programa ng conditional cash-transfer (CCT) na ipinagmamalaki bilang centerpiece project ng gobyerno para mabawasan ang kahirapan ngayon.

Wala kaming makitang dapat ipagmalaki sa CCT. Sa aming pagsusuri, ang CCT ay debt-driven (proyekting pinondohan ng utang na babayaran din ng bayan). Ang pagkakaloob nito ay nababalutan pa ng lihim (sino ang pumipili sa mga bibigyan ng pondo) at sa ilang pagkakataon ay iniulat na tadtad ng anomalya (sinong ahensya ng gobyerno ang nakikinabang sa pamumudmod nito).

Mababasa rin ang isyu hinggil sa desisyon ng Korte Suprema na pinagbigyan ang korporasyong Cojuangco-Aquino na idaan sa panibagong reperendum ang karaingan ng mga magbubukid sa Hacienda Luisita na ipamahagi ang mga lupa doon. Sa desisyong ito, nakasalang ang political will at commitment ng Pangulong Aquino na ipatupad ang Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) na pambatong programa ng kanyang ina (o totoo ba ito?).

Mayroon ding dalawang artikulo hinggil sa pag-angkin ng Pilipinas sa Spratly Islands na inaangkin din ng iba pang mga bansa sa Southeast Asia, gaya ng China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, at Taiwan. Tama ba na tawagin ni Presidente Noynoy ang makapangyarihang United States para makasama sa karambola?

Isang lider ng Partido Lakas ng Masa ang nakulong kamakailan sa Malaysia – si Ka Romy Castillo. Basahin ang kasaysayan ng kanyang pagkaaresto, pagkakakulong at paglaya sa loob na pahina.

Sa isyung ito, mayroon din kaming panawagan sa mga kasamahan namin sa progresibong hanay (gaya ng Akbayan) na may alyansa sa gobyernong Aquino at sa partido nito (Liberal Party). Matagal namin silang nakasama sa kalsada para sa pakikipaglaban sa maraming isyu gaya ng debt moratorium, scrap VAT, repeal VFA, genuine land reform, at marami pang iba. Gusto naming marinig kung ano sa mga isyung ipinaglaban natin sa kalsada ang may tsansang maisulong sa “reform” government ni Pangulong Noynoy.

Ang isyung ito ay inilathala ng Partido Lakas ng Masa (PLM) at ilalabas sa panapanahon.##

Philippine Development Program ng Gobyernong Aquino: Walang Pinag-iba sa Gobyernong Arroyo

ANG PHILIPPINE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PDP) ang bagong tawag sa Medium Term Development Plan ng gobyerno. Laman nito ang pangkalahatang programa sa loob ng anim na taong panunungkulan ni Presidente Noynoy Aquino (mula 2011 hanggang 2016). Nasa plano ang ipinagmamalaking pilo-sopiya, pananaw at pamamaraan ng gobyerno para makamit ang “pag-unlad, kahirapan, kapayapaan at hustisyang panlipunan.” Ang islogan o pangunahing hangarin ng PDP ni Presidente Noynoy (PDP ni PNoy) ay magkaroon ng “inclusive growth” – isang paglago raw ng ekonomiya na tatamasahin ng lahat. Paglago na lilikha ng trabaho, hahatak sa mayorya tungo sa pang-ekonomiya at panlipunang pagsulong, at magpaliit ng antas ng kahirapan ng masa. Magandang salita. Pero sa katotohanan, ang salitang “inclusive growth” ay palusot lamang para iwasan ang tunay na paraan ng pag-unlad ng kabuhayan ng masa -- ang redistribusyon ng kita o ng yaman.



Paano gagawin

Kung paano makakamit ang kaunlaran, walang maliwanag na mga patakarang inihaharap ang PDP ni PNoy, kundi mga pangako, gaya ng oportunidad sa trabaho para sa marami, istabilidad ng ekonomiya, malawakang investment sa infrastructure, at iba pa.

Para magkaroon ng kaunlaran, kinikilala ng gobyernong Aquino na balakid ang problemang dulot ng di-sapat na pamumuhunan, di-sapat na social services, jobless growth, at iba pa. Pero mali ang pagsusuri nito kung bakit nagaganap ang nasabing mga problema. Ang mga problemang ito ay pangunahing dulot ng konsentrasyon ng yaman at puhunan sa iilang asendero, malalaking korporasyon, at mayayamang pamilya – habang ang nakararami ay wala man lamang pagkakakitaan o naipon na maipupuhunan. Mantakin na lamang: mayroong top 40 Filipino billionaires at multimillionaires ngayon sang-ayon sa Forbes Magazine, Pero 40 million ang naghihirap na mga Pilipino. Ang mga bilyonaryo at multi-milyonaryong ito ang nagmomonopolisa ng pamu-

muhunan, negosyo at kalakalan sa bansa. Pangunahing kasosyo nila ang mga dambuhalang korporasyong dayuhan. Kaya ang problema ng pamumuhunan at iba pa ay hindi malulutas sa lalo pang pagbubukas ng bansa sa mga dayuhan na siyang gustong mangyari ng gobyernong Aquino.

Neoliberal na patakaran

Gayundin, ang PDP ni PNoy ay pagtutuloy lamang ng mga neoliberal na patakaran na ang tanging nakikinabang ay malalaking korporasyon, mayayamang angkan at mga sagadsaring trapo sa bansa. Ang “massive investment sa infrastructure” ay ipatutupad sa ilalim ng public-private partnership (PPP) program. Sa ibang salita, pagpapatuloy lamang ito ng neoliberal na patakaran sa privatization.

Ang kaibhan lamang nito ay bibigyan ng maliit na papel ang gobyerno para makisyo sa mga korporasyong pribado. Sa kalaunan, ang pakinabang ay mauwi lamang sa private sector na madikit sa gobyerno. Batid ng lahat ang partnership ng gobyerno at San Miguel Corporation, gobyerno at Meralco, gob-verno at Manila Water at Maynilad, gobyerno at PLDT... Lahat ito ay nagdulot ng ibayong hirap sa masa sa anyo ng mataas na presyo ng mga produkto at serbisyo, at mga bagong pasanin sa buwis. Gayundin, ang sinasabing pagtatayo ng competitive at sustainable na “productive sectors” ay pagpapatuloy lamang ng pag-iral ng ekonomiyang import-dependent at export-oriented. Walang klarong industrial development program ang gobyernong Aquino sang-ayon sa PDP nito

Kontra-mahirap, kontra-manggagawang PDP

Sa ilalim ng PDP ni PNoy, isusulong din ang mga kontra-mahirap at kontra-manggagawang proyekto gaya ng paglilipat sa mahihirap sa mga lugar na walang pagkakakitaan, pag-amyenda sa Labor Code para sa pakinabang ng mga kapitalista, gaya ng pagpapatupad ng “individual employment negotiation” sa mga employer (sa halip na collective bargaining sa unyon), at pagpapataw pa ng mga bagong buwis.

Sa madaling sabi, ang PDP ni PNoy ay walang ihahatid na kaunlaran. Ito’y neoliberal na programa ng isang neoliberal na gobyerno. Wala itong pinag-iba sa mga patakarang ipinatupad ni Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Ang kaibhan lamang, isinulong ang neoliberal na programa sa panahon ni Gloria Arroyo kasabay ng malawak na katiwalian at pagnanakaw ng pondo.

Ngayon, kahit sabihing mawala man ang katiwalian at pagnanakaw, ang proyekting ito ay wala pa ring saysay sa masa. Ang pakinabang dito ay tatamasahin lamang ng mga bilyonaryo at multimilyonaryo, mga asendero at mayayamang korporasyon, at mga angkan ng trapo.##

Negotiated political settlement to the Spratly Islands dispute

The Partido Lakas ng Masa condemns any actions that increase military tensions in the region and contribute to a regional military conflict by countries that lay claim to the Spratly Islands. We are opposed to any sabre-rattling and stand for a negotiated, political settlement of the disputed claims to the islands. We also deplore China’s strong-arm tactics and bullying, which undermines efforts towards a peaceful, political settlement of the disputes.

The Spratly Islands, less than four-square kilometers of land area spread over 425,000-square kilometers of sea and usually submerged under water, holds significant reserves of oil and natural gas. It reportedly has 17.7 billion tons of oil and natural gas reserves, larger than the 13 billion tons held by Kuwait, making it the fourth largest reserve bed in the world. It is a productive area for world fishing and accounted for 8% of the total world catch in 1988. The region is also one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.

The history of the various claims is lengthy and contorted. Malaysia has occupied three islands that it considers to be within its continental shelf. Swallow Reef (Layang Layang) has been turned into an island through land reclamation and establishment of tourist facilities. China and Taiwan claim that the islands have historically been a part of China for nearly 2000 years, discovered during the Han Dynasty in 2 B.C. Vietnam disputes China’s claims on the basis that the ancient Chinese records were about non-Chinese foreign territories and that China did not claim sovereignty over the Spratlys until after the Second World War. Vietnam, which currently occupies 31 islands, based its claims on international law concerning prior declaration and exercise of sovereignty. Brunei’s claims to the reef are based on the United Nations Law of the Sea. Brunei claims that the southern part of the Spratly chain is actually a part of its continental shelf and therefore a part of its territory and resources.

The Philippines bases its claims of sovereignty on the issues of Res nullius and geography. Res nullius (literally ‘nobody’s property’) means there was no effective sovereignty over the islands until the 1930s when France and then Japan acquired the islands. According to the San Francisco Treaty between Japan and the Allied powers signed in 1951, Japan relinquished its sovereignty over the islands without any special beneficiary. Thus, the Philippines argues that the islands became available for annexation. The Philippines did not register its claims until the 1970s and annexed the islands in 1978, calling them the Kalayaan Island

Regional cooperation to solve tension in the Spratlys

We call for a negotiated political settlement of the Spratly islands’ disputes among contesting nations, such as the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. We are opposed to strong-arm tactics, bullying, warships deployment that may escalate military tensions in the region. The Philippines has lodged complaints against China’s increasing presence and military activities in the Spratly islands which — it is believed — has oil and natural gas reserves larger than the 13 billion tons held by Kuwait, making it the fourth largest reserve bed in the world.

We call on all claimant countries to sit down and peacefully resolve the disputes. We also call on them to exercise joint cooperation in the exploration of the natural resources of the islands and the surrounding sea for the benefit of the Asian nations as a whole. We are proposing the kind of regional cooperation that is now developing in Latin America through the ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for Latin America) which fosters economic integration and mutual aid in the region. ALBA includes the countries of Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Cuba.

On this regard, we call on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) member-countries and China to stop increasing military tension and foster regional cooperation to assist each other in the economic



and maritime field by the operationalization of the China-Asean Common Market which could develop and manage the disputed islands.

We also advise President Noynoy Aquino to exercise restraint and diplomacy, stop the military posturing over the Spratly dispute, and not to call on the United States to meddle in the disputes under the disguise of helping the Philippines. The United States has its own imperial interests in the region, and its entry into the disputes will only aggravate the divisions among Asian neighbors. War in Asia will only play to the advantage of big powers, and ultimately, the United States which has vast economic interests and major military bases and troops stationed in the region.###

Group. The cornerstone of the Philippines’ claim to the Spratlys lies within the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone according to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The strategic importance of these islands, in a world faced with rapidly dwindling natural resources and increasingly precarious food security, are fuelling the disputes. In a region which has had more than its share of war and conflict, due to colonial and imperialist aggression, we must reject all and every response which escalates military tensions.

Furthermore, we do not believe that the national sovereignty of the countries involved is at stake. The issue of national sovereignty is legitimate only if there are national islanders, or an actual indigenous population inhabiting the islands, whose economic interests and culture historically coincide with the interests of a nation state. But this is not the case. Only a small number of military personnel occupy some of the islands. Sovereignty cannot be solely defined as authority over territories. The Spratlys is simply a disputed ter-

ritory and therefore must be resolved through straightforward negotiations. To argue that national sovereignty is at stake is dangerous as it raises the stakes and justifies even the possibility of resolving the disputes through war.

We also oppose any attempts by the Philippine government and the defense department to purchase military equipment ‘to better address the Spratlys issue,’ as described by AFP spokesman Commodore Rodriguez. In a country that continues to face an armed liberation movement struggling for self-determination of the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao, as well as a guerrilla warfare undertaken by left groups in pursuit of social justice, any ‘nationwide modernization upgrade’ as proposed by the AFP will inevitably be used by the government against the legitimate struggle of the Bangsamoro peoples and the left. Therefore, any moves by the AFP to purchase weapons under the guise of ‘national defense’ must also be opposed.

July 10, 2011

Hunyo 28, 2011, may 70 miyembro ng Partido Lakas ng Masa ang nagtipon sa harap ng Embahada ng Malaysia para manawagan sa pagpapalaya sa 30 aktibista ng Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) na ikinulong dahil sa paglahok sa pro-democracy rally. Nagsumite si Ka Sonny Melencio, Tagapangulo ng PLM, ng isang liham sa kinatawan ng embahada upang ipaalam sa gobyerno ng Malaysia ang kahilingan ng PLM na palayain agad ang mga nakakulong. Hulyo 1, 2011, muling bumalik ang mga kasapi ng PLM sa Embahada upang hingin naman ang agad na pagpapalaya kay Ka Romy Castillo, isa sa mga lider ng PLM, na iniulat na hinuli noong Hunyo 30 sa Kuala Lumpur airport habang pauwi na sa Pilipinas. Si Ka Romy ay bumisita lamang sa Malaysia upang dumalo sa isang pagpupulong ng Parti Sosialis Malaysia. Nanawagan ang asawa ni Ka Romy na si Tess Castillo para sa agarang pagpapalaya kay Ka Romy at 30 pang aktibista.

Unang inaresto si Ka Romy noong Hunyo 25 dahil sa pagsama sa pro-democracy caravan na humihingi ng malinis na eleksyon sa Malaysia. Inaresto siya kasama ng iba pa habang nakasakay sa isang bus na papunta sana sa lugar ng protesta. Pinalaya si Ka Romy, subalit inaresto muli noong Hunyo 30 sa airport ng Kuala Lumpur. Kinausap ng PLM ang Embahada ng Pilipinas sa Kuala Lumpur para tulungang makalaya si Ka Romy. Tumulong sina Consul General Renato Villa at Attache Mendel Rivera sa pagbisita at pagbabantay sa kaso ni Ka Romy Castillo. Ipinarating rin ng PLM ang kaso sa Commission on Human Rights at sa Overseas Filipino Workers Affairs Office ng Department of Foreign Affairs sa Manila.

Sa ikatlong beses, noong Hulyo 5, 2011, mahigit 100 miyembro ng PLM ang nagmartsa sa Embahada ng Malaysia sa Makati upang magprotesta sa pagkakakulong ni Ka Romy at ng 30 aktibista. Idineklara ng PLM ang ambasadador ng Malaysian Embassy na si Ibrahim Saad bilang persona non grata dahil sa hindi pakikiharap sa PLM at hindi pagtulong sa kaso ni Ka Romy at 30 aktibistang Malaysian.. Dahil sa sunud-sunod na protesta ng PLM at iba pang mga grupo, pinalaya rin si Ka Romy noong Hulyo 7. Narito ang ilang bahagi ng salaysay ni Ka Romy hinggil sa kanyang pagkakaaresto at pagkakakulong:

Hunyo 30, 2011. Tinawagan ko si Sonny Melencio upang ipaalam sa kanya ang mga nangyayari. Naramdaman ko agad na ako’y maaaresto. Nag check-in ako at tumuloy sa Immigration. Hiningi ng isang personel ang aking passport, at sinabihan ako na maghintay munat. Tinanong ko siya kung

Matagumpay na kampanya ng pagpapalaya kay Ka Romy

bakit, nang biglang limang malalakeng lalaki ang lumapit sa akin at dinala ako sa opisina Immigration. Kinumpiska nila ang aking cellphone at passport!

Sa opisina, ako’y kanilang pinosasan at sumailalim sa “interrogation” na tumagap ng halos 10 oras. Isinagawa ito ng 3 o 4 na magkakaibang grupo na may 5 hindi pinayagan na kausapin ako. Lahat ng gamit ko ay kinuha for “safe keeping.” Pinaghubad ako pati underwear at binigyan ng mabahong damit-presyo. Inilagay ako sa isang selda na may sukat 3m x 2.5 m x 4m.



Dalawa lang ang puwedeng humiga sa papag at lima hanggang anim sa bawat selda. Nasa gitna na din ang toilet (squat style).

Kasama ko sa selda and isang Pinoy (Luis Espiritu Pellas) na may kasong drug trafficking at iba pang nationalities. Kinaumagahan, inilipat kami sa bagong kulungan. Nakaposas kami lahat na nakakabit sa kadena at tigwa-walong tao bawat kadena. Sa bagong kulungan na mas maliit at mas mainit, mas dumami kami...

Hulyo 6, 2011 bandang 10:00 ng umaga, sumigaw ang guwardiya na “Romeo Castelo, you go home now.” Inilibas nila ako sa kulungan at ako’y nagbihis, at dinala ko na rin ang aking mga gamit. Dalawang miyembro ng PSM ang kasama ko, sila kapatid Silvain at Mohan, at nahawakan kong muli ang aking passport.

Hinatid ako sa eroplano ng anim na opisera na nagimbestiga sa akin. Inilagay ako sa Business Class ngunit hinawakan ang aking passport habang nasa loob ako ng eroplano. Lumapag ang

eroplano sa Clark airport sa oras na 11:40 ng umaga, Hulyo 7. Nagkaroon ng di pagkakaunawaan at nag-antay muli ako sa Immigration ng isa’t kalahating oras dahil sa aking passport. Nag sagawa ng eksaminasyon at tinatakan ang aking passport ng “Not Deported” at muli na nga akong nakauwi, sa piling ni Marites.

Sa victory party para kay Ka Romy, sinabi ni Sonny Melencio na ang paglaya ni Ka Romy ay hindi pa ganap na tagumpay dahil anim mula sa 30 aktibista ay nakakulong pa rin sa Malaysia. Nagpasalamat din si Melencio sa mga tumulong sa paglaya ni Ka Romy kabilang na ang iba’t ibang human rights group at mga otoridad gaya ng Philippine Commission on Human Rights at Philippine Embassy sa Kuala Lumpur.###

The problems with the conditional cash transfer funding

6–14 years old comply with deworming protocol at schools; and (iv) the household grantee (mother) and/or spouse attend family development sessions at least once a month.

Poor households with children 6–14 years old are eligible for the education grant. The education transfer is P300 (\$7) per child per month (for 10 months per year), for up to a maximum of three children. Beneficiary households will receive the education transfer for each child from 6 to 14 years of age as long as they are enrolled in primary or secondary school and maintain a class attendance rate of at least 85%



every month. Eligible households can receive both the health and education grants. The average transfer per household is estimated at 23% of the average annual household income. So far it sounds so good. But let’s ana-

cess to reproductive health services.” International donor agencies are in a mild panic as they face the prospect of countries not being able to achieve the less-than-minimum millennium development goals or MDGs. They will pressure us to recklessly get into debt to try and meet these targets. But this also provides us with an opportunity – to be firm and negotiate conditions that benefit the country in the short and long run. Also, if the new President and government has political capital in the eyes of the international community, why not use this to extract grants, rather than loans.

Thirdly, we believe that conditional cash

transfers are short-term measures – essentially anti-crisis measures – to mitigate risks and negative impacts. Therefore borrowing and getting into debt for short-term impacts is short-sighted and even reckless. We need long-term solutions. This means we must increase investments, starting with the national budget, on health and education. We call on the government to immediately double the national budget on health and education. The Philippines spends only around 6.4% on health as a percentage of total government expenditure, compared to our neighbor Thailand, for example, that spends 11.3%, or China with 9.9%. (UNDP 2009) A long-term measure is to provide universal health care and education.

The ADB also provides Asian development fund loans, on concessional rates and grants (as opposed to loans) to developing countries. We call on the government and its negotiating team not to borrow loans at market rates for such a program, but demand that the ADB provides the government with grant funding instead. If the ADB wants to assist us with our social programs and wants to strengthen the country’s social protection system, let it provide us grant funding – ‘free’ money – instead of loans, especially non-concessional loans, that only serve to increase the country’s debt burden.

We call on our government negotiators to stand firm on this. If the Philippines does not qualify for grants, then insist on changing the terms with the ADB and other international financial institutions. The country’s historic national debt and the automatic debt appropriation law that sacrifices the budget to loan repayments should make the government more circumspect. We call on the government to apply the utmost caution in negotiating more burdensome loans. Secondly, even the ADB documents on the loan admit that the “Key causes of poverty in the Philippines include high inequality and chronic underinvestment in physical and human capital, especially health and education. As a result, the Philippines is lagging on progress in non-income MDG targets for universal primary education, maternal mortality, and ac-

This PLM statement was issued during the initial implementation of the CCT in August 2010. The ADB loan was released in September 2010.

A challenge to the Left in the Aquino government:

It's time to review your strategy

The election to office of the new president Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III brought with it increased mass expectations. The president’s campaign slogan of ridding the country of corruption and the wanton displays of greed and abuse of power was welcomed with cheers and hope by a population sick and tired of the graft-ridden regime of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

With the entry of the Left in government, i.e., with the ascent of the Akbayan party-list as a coalition partner of the Noynoy government, the expectations of some sections of the left were also heightened. Akbayan sees the strategy of working with the presidency as an alliance with a “reforming section” of the bourgeoisie and through such an alliance it expected a number of reforms to be put in place.

But we should also ask ourselves, what standards should the Left set for a reform agenda, especially when Left political parties are in a coalition government?

Surely, it should not be to merely hope for a better presidency than that of GMA, the most unpopular presidency since the Marcos dictatorship, which had no reforming agenda or ethical standards. Instead the standards set for the new government should consist of implementing some genuine reforms addressing the basic issues of the masses. These are the issues that the mass movement has been campaigning on for decades now, such as:

- debt moratorium to finance social welfare projects
- scrapping of the value-added tax

- repeal of the oil deregulation law
- termination of the Visiting Forces Agreement
- genuine land reform program
- living wage for workers
- passage of a reproductive health bill supporting women’s rights.

We had no illusions that the Noynoy government would adopt a program ala-TRG (transitional revolutionary government) that the Left put forward during the campaign to oust GMA. But there was some expectation of meaningful reforms if the Left held power and influence in a coalition government with the bourgeoisie.

With the Left in government, we must set the bar much higher when assessing the progress made within the last year. How far have we gone in the “reforms” undertaken by the government? The campaign against graft and corruption has made a good start but it keeps getting blocked in various dead-ends: even the aim to cleanse the graft-ridden Armed Forces of the Philippines has now been contained to a few retired generals. Only the minor bureaucrats feel the sting of the anti-corruption investigation and the big ones, including GMA and her family, or even the big-time crooks such as the Marcoses, are not really threatened by it.

Aside from the high-profile investigation of graft and corruption, not even minimal reforms have been implemented by the present regime. By even a minimalist standard, this government cannot be judged as one implementing a reform agenda. To this extent, the Left strategy of working within the government had proved



to be ineffectual and sadly wanting.

On the contrary, the neoliberal program continues to be implemented in all of its fundamentals and even in the details (see the article in this issue on the PDP of PNoy and the problem with the conditional cash transfer program). On none of the issues that the mass movement has been campaigning for over the past few decades, especially against neoliberal policies, has there been any meaningful progress. At best the tactics of the Left have been one of containment -- of defending and protecting the President from the mistakes and blunders of the governing team and helping maintain the illusions of a reforming presidency. Ultimately this also means defending the neoliberal governmental program of the President. If this course continues, the Left could face dire consequences in the period ahead.

How do we move forward on the basic agenda of the masses is still the key question. The Left being in government under the Aquino presidency has not achieved any positive momentum in this regards. So how do we continue in the period ahead?

There is no other way but to rebuild and renew the independent mass movement and the independent mobilization of the masa, drawing in new generations and new layers in to struggle. This means that the movement must be politically independent of the government and the governing parties. Only by protecting its political independence in this way will the movement be able to fight uncompromisingly for the demands of the -- not as “pressure groups” (or as others would say, “watchdogs”) of the government, but even in direct opposition to it.

The Left being in government could compromise the development of such a movement, with potentially disastrous consequences. A president that has no political will and a government that is not committed to meaningful reforms will take the easy route (ang matuwid na daan) of continuing down the anti-people path of neoliberalism.

We conclude with a warning: as the illusions and expectations of the masa in the Noynoy government recedes, as is the current trend, the political crisis that will inevitably unfold could easily break out such as to give the Right-wing forces the initiative and advantage. Such a risk is even greater if the Left is tarnished and compromised by its participation in a government that does not represent the interests of the masa. The Left must demonstrate its political independence from this government and put itself forward as an independent alternative that the masses can identify with and rally around.###

PLM Supports the Struggle of Farmers in Hacienda Luisita

After sitting on the case for five (5) years, the Supreme Court on July 5 came up with a decision that sets up another stumbling block to the 43-year old fight to redistribute Hacienda Luisita. While upholding the December 2005 resolution of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) revoking the Hacienda’s stock distribution plan of 1989, the Court calls for another referendum to make the hacienda farmers and farm workers choose between the stock option or land redistribution. This decision fits almost perfectly into the latest of the Cojuangco family’s scheme to retain control of Luisita. Twenty two (22) years after a Stock Distribution Plan (1989) was applied to Hacienda Luisita in lieu of redistribution to farmers, both the Court and the Cojuangco family can no longer deny that the stock option did not work for the benefit of the farmers. A referendum is a democratic instrument. But if employed in a context where the contending parties—in this case, between the Cojuangcos and the farmers, are so unequal in power, money and access to information, the result is a done deal for the superior party. The State could be the leveller, but again, in this particular case as in most cases between big landlords and farmers, the Cojuangcos have incomparably and exceedingly far larger access to and clout over State decision-making than the farmers. The 1989 referendum on SDO showed this in bold relief.

The Cojuangco family acquired and retained the 6,443 hectare Hacienda Luisita through a classic example of how Philippine oligarchs apply their clout over the Philippine State and make use of its deci-

sion-making power and violence to retain and enlarge their class privilege. The Central Bank Monetary Board Resolution of 1957 committed Philippine international reserves to Jose Cojuangco’s 10 year US\$ 2.1 million loan from the Manufacturer’s Trust Company in New York to enable him to buy the controlling share in the Central Azucara de Tarlac) and the G S I S Resolution of 1 9 5 8 extended a P 5.9 million loan also to Cojuangco to purchase Hacienda Luisita on condition that the hacienda would be distributed to the tillers after ten (10) years. The 10-year period expired in 1967-68 but it was only twelve (12) years after, in May 1980, when the Philippine Government filed a case to recover Luisita for redistribution to the farmers. The Cojuangcos argued that the Resolutions could not be valid because there were no tenants in Luisita, only hired laborers. Marcos tolerated the Cojuangco’s disputed ownership of the hacienda until the Manila Regional Trial Court in December 1985 ordered the Cojuangcos to surrender the hacienda to the government.

The EDSA Revolt of 1986 overtook the case. Before Congress could convene in July 28, 1987, ending Cory Aquino’s leg-



islative powers, Ms. Aquino signed a midnight decree in July 22, 1987, allowing a stock distribution option (SDO) as an option in lieu of redistribution under her comprehensive agrarian reform decree. Congress included SDO in the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988 as one among a number of modalities for agrarian reform. Hacienda Luisita was placed under SDO in 1989 after a one-sided referendum in favor of the Cojuangcos. Presidential power was used by Marcos to play the Luisita card against the Cojuangcos and Ninoy Aquino.

The same presidential power was used by Cory Aquino to protect her family’s hacienda against the government’s commitment to recover it for land reform. Six years after, in 1995, nearly 65% of the hacienda’s land area was reclassified from agricultural to commercial, industrial and residential. Some 500 hectares of the 3, 290 reclassified hectares were approved by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) for conversion. Peping Cojuangco’s wife, Tingting, was Tarlac governor at that time. The land conversion of Luisita steadily reduced the area left for farming. Work days were cut and the wages were frozen. Mechanization started to downsize the work force.

When the hacienda management decided to retrench in October 2004, farm workers staged a strike in November 2004 which government military forces brutally dispersed. A massacre took place with 14 farmers killed and around 200 seriously injured. Until now, the victims of the Luisita massacre have yet to receive justice. The plight of the Luisita farmers and farm

workers is highly symbolic of the state of land reform in our country today. Big landholdings remain untouched after twenty three (23) years. Vast areas escaped the law via conversions to commercial uses. The limited scope where CARP was applied has been going through difficult times as result of liberalization. Land reconcentration is proceeding apace as big agribusiness capitalists and merchant capitalists together with kindred and allied bureaucrats push more and more small farms into bankruptcy. Peasant ruin imposes more burden on the rural women who often shoulder more the impact of economic difficulties , and denies the future to millions of our young people in the countrysides. The Supreme Court decision could be a fatal blow to agrarian reform which is already comatose under CARPER, the extended CARP, by declaring that “the old pastoral model of land ownership where nonhuman juridical persons, such as corporations were prohibited from owning agricultural lands are no longer realistic under existing conditions.” The decision sets the stage for large agribusiness takeover of the lands still to be covered by the agrarian reform law and for reconcentration in the hands of big landlord-corporate interests of those already distributed. We must not allow Hacienda Luisita to bleed more with injustice. The fight in Hacienda Luisita like all other land struggles throughout the country is the fight of all peasants and farm workers. It is the fight of our people for social justice and redress of historical wrongs. We must press the Government, in particular, the President and the Department of Agrarian Reform to immediately move towards redistributing Hacienda Luisita, make the Cojuangcos and their realty corporation pay the farmers and farm workers their due and challenge the Court to junk the referendum which is unjust and a legal anomaly. ###