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Editorial

The 2013 elections were of no use to the people

The Filipino people did not benefit at all from the recently concluded elections of 2013. These polls clearly were no different from elections in the past half century or so under reactionary neocolonial rule. As in the past, the elections were dominated by big political parties funded by the big comprador bourgeoisie and landlords, representing their interests and those of foreign big business.

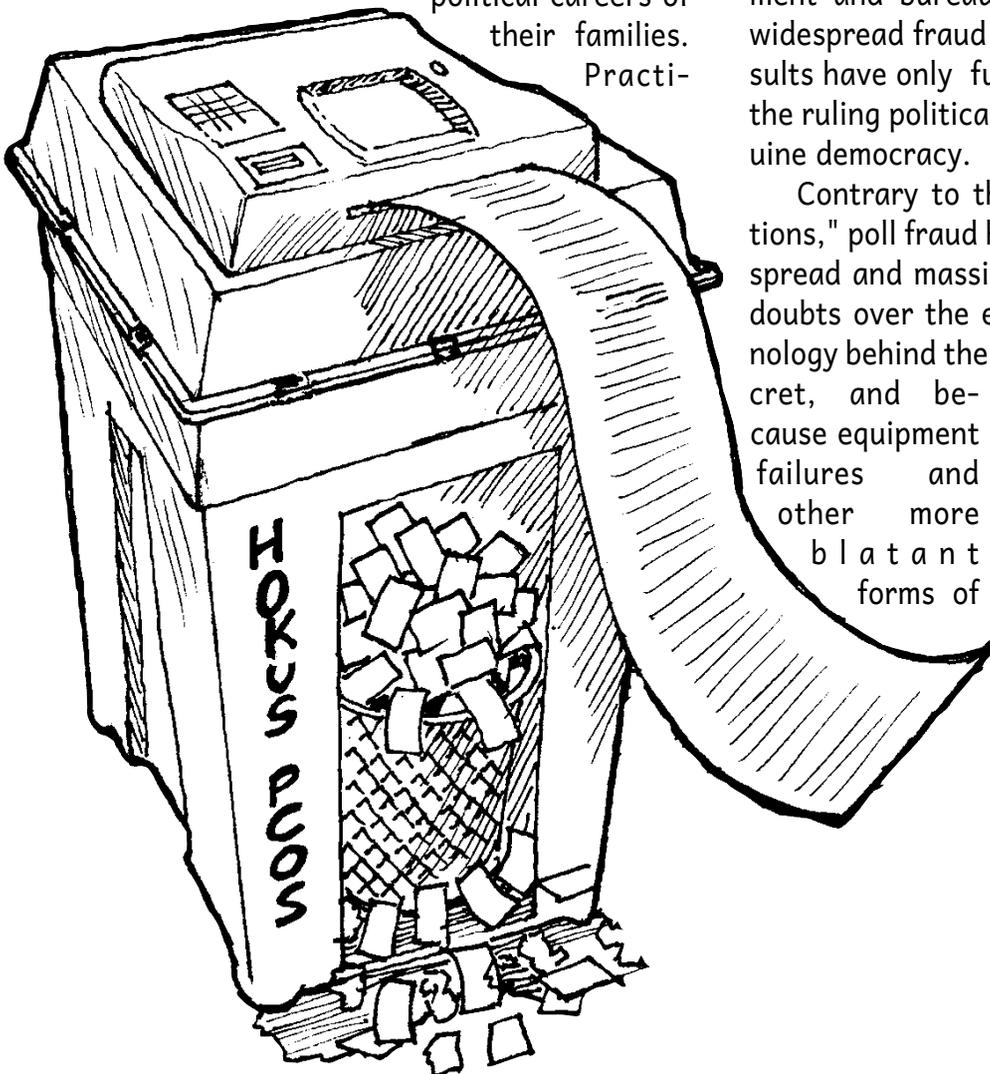
More than 75% of the newly elected representatives of the reactionary congress belong to traditional political clans or dynasties, extending the political careers of their families. Practi-

cally none of them come from, and represent, the toiling masses.

The Filipino people did not attain any significant benefits from the 2013 elections. The polls merely created the illusion of democracy, even if this only meant the "democratic" selection by the people of representatives of the ruling classes and the election of those who would be drafting and implementing laws that would oppress and exploit them.

The recent polls only reinforced the control of the reactionary ruling classes over their government and bureaucracy. On the other hand, the widespread fraud and manipulation of election results have only further exposed the rottenness of the ruling political system and the absence of genuine democracy.

Contrary to the promise of "automated elections," poll fraud has become more rampant, widespread and massive. The people have widespread doubts over the election, both because the technology behind the automated counting remains secret, and because equipment failures and other more blatant forms of



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poll fraud were rife.

Aquino boastfully claims that the 9-3 result of the senatorial elections and his majority victory in the lower house of the reactionary congress are proof that the people support his "righteous path" slogan. But no one is cheering, not even from the middle classes.

The people know full well that Team PNoy mustered huge resources from government and big businessmen supportive of Aquino to buy the loyalty and support of local politicians and launch very expensive radio and television campaigns. A massive publicity campaign alongside the manipulation of electoral results was launched by the ruling Aquino regime, leading to widespread incredulousness over, and repudiation of, the election results.

Aquino's majority control over the senate and congress will surely be used by the ruling regime to further strengthen its oppressive and repressive rule. Most of the newly elected senators are Aquino

allies whom he could count on to support the enactment of laws that would hew to the policy and program dictates of the IMF-World Bank and foreign big businessmen.

Goaded by his imperialist master and big foreign businessmen, the next three years of Aquino's regime will focus on the further liberalization of investment and trade policies in the Philippines. The US and big business have been pushing for the removal of provisions in the reactionary 1987 constitution that ban foreign ownership of land and foreign management of key enterprises and services in the Philippines. This can be done either through a constitutional convention or commission or by enacting new laws that would abrogate these provisions, as Aquino wishes.

In accordance with his US master's desire, Aquino has also been calling for the enactment of new laws to justify the growing and more frequent presence and basing of US military forces in the Philippines and circum-

vent the limitations and prohibitions stipulated in the reactionary constitution of 1987 against foreign bases and military facilities. Foreign big businesses have also been demanding the removal of a ban on electing a president for more than a single six-year term.

With his firm control over Congress, Aquino plans to push for the further liberalization of the Mining Act of 1995 to attract bigger investments in this sector, disregarding the people's widespread opposition to the foreign plunder of the country's patrimony and the widespread environmental destruction wrought by large-scale commercial mining, plantation and logging operations.

Aquino will also further push in Congress his budgetary program featuring austerity measures that call for budget cuts in public services and the all-out privatization of public hospitals and schools in the next few years. Aquino has likewise been emboldened to push for new taxes to raise government revenues in the face of the continuing economic crisis.

With the absence of a big opposition bloc in Congress, Aquino hopes to have new government contracts signed by his cronies, who have long been drooling over the planned LRT extension, higher fares and the privatization of the MRT and the Laguna Lake dredging project. As it was with the Daang Hari project, Aquino wants these contracts to end up with his cronies, despite the existence of other bidders offering lower costs to government.

Aquino will also have even more boldness to intensify the all-out war of suppression Oplan Bayanihan. Aquino wants the reactionary congress to help in expanding funds for the Armed

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Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP). Human rights violations will become even more brutal in the next three years as Aquino desperately attempts to defeat the people's democratic struggles and armed resistance. He likewise wants to expand funds for his deceptive "pantawid-pamilya," Pamana and Kalahi programs, which will only be pocketed by military commanders and local bureaucrat capitalists.

The biggest problems and issues being faced by the Filipino people were ignored in the previous election. Except for the efforts made by a number of progressive parties that joined the elections, the debates and discussions during the campaign failed to focus on the people's demand for land reform and national industrialization, higher wages, lower prices, jobs, a stop to demolitions, affordable housing and other democratic demands.

Because the recently concluded elections are not expected to bring basic changes to the Filipino people, they have no other recourse but to intensify their struggles against the pro-imperialist and anti-people Aquino regime. The people must build their broad unity and isolate the US-Aquino regime. They must thoroughly push for their interests and launch ever intensifying and ever expanding mass struggles and armed resistance for their national and social liberation. **AB**

Political clans continue to rule

Reactionary political clans continued to rule after the May 13 elections. Previously powerful political families dominated the polls, bagging positions in the reactionary government from the national to the local levels.

Representatives of old political dynasties won as senators, among them Francis Escudero, Alan Peter Cayetano, Nancy Binay, Edgardo Angara Jr., Benigno "Bam" Aquino IV, Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III, Cynthia Villar and JV Ejercito Estrada. Also reelected were old faces in politics like Loren Legarda, Antonio Trillanes IV and Gregorio Honasan. Meanwhile, Grace Poe led the senatorial race on the strength of her late father's name—famous actor Fernando Poe Jr. who was a presidential candidate in 2004.

In the provinces, members of various political clans were reelected to various positions, like the Marcoses, Singsons and Ortegas in the Ilocos region; the Dys in Cagayan Valley; the Remullas and Revillas in Cavite; the Romuladezes and Petillas in Leyte; the Villafuertes and Fuentebellas in Camarines Sur; the Ongs in Samar; the Ramas and Garcias in Cebu; the Marañons and Lacsons in Negros; the Defensors and Garins in Iloilo; and the Dimaporos, Ampatuans and Mangudadatus in the ARMM.

In cases where dynasties were unseated, they were merely replaced by other powerful families or politicians supported by the latter.

The 2013 elections clearly did nothing to change the rule of these dynasties in reactionary Philippine politics. A 2010 study by the Center for People Empowerment in Government (CenPEG) determined that there were only 178 political clans (excluding the localities) controlling the entire

bureaucracy. One hundred or 56% of these clans were belonged to the "old elite" and 78 or 44% belonged to the "new elite" that became ascendant since 1986.

The lower house of the reactionary congress is dominated by 115 political clans. Even the partylist system, which supposedly accomodates representatives of oppressed sectors is controlled by big political clans: 91% or 56 representatives are millionaires. In the senate, 23 out of 24 members belong to powerful political clans.

Meanwhile, 94% or 73 provincial governments are ruled by political dynasties—at the very least, by 2.31 families per province. In the past 25 years, only one family has dominated Rizal (the Ynares family), La Union (Ortega), Lanao del Norte (Dimaporo), Camarines Sur (Villa-fuerte), Leyte (Petilla and Romualdez) and Agusan del Sur (Plaza).

In the same period, only 19 families had complete control over congressional elections; 17 provinces were lorded over by clans that held the positions of governor, congressman and other related government positions.

For the toiling masses, on the other hand, no basic changes in their lives are forthcoming as a result of the 2013 elections. The polls merely reinforced the continuing rule of political dynasties. While the majority of the Filipino people are stuck in the quagmire of poverty and oppression, political clans and their big businessman and big landlord allies and their imperialist master enjoy the perks of power. **AB**

Widespread electronic fraud in the recently concluded polls

From the voting to the counting, the recently concluded elections were chaotic and ridden with anomalies. There is widespread belief of large-scale manipulation of the election results.

Up to 60% of the problems reported during the polls had to do with the precinct count optical scan (PCOS) machines, many of which were defective and failed to operate. More were damaged while the voting was going on due to overheating and various mechanical problems. Many people were unable to vote because of delays in the repair of the machines. Supplies of marking pens, indelible ink and other election paraphernalia ran out. Other areas suffered power outages. Many precincts reverted to manual counting of votes. In many cases, the transmission of PCOS results was delayed. Many voters failed to find their names on the lists and ended up being listed in other precincts.

This came on top of the more traditional forms of intimidation and fraud such as rampant vote-buying, fielding of flying voters and various other methods of manipulating the results of the polls. Military harassment of supporters of progressive parties intensified, especially in areas considered as their "bailiwicks."

Long before the polls, independent election watchdogs such as AES Watch and Kontradaya assailed the refusal of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to reveal the source code or the basis of the computer program used to run the PCOS machines. The critics said that without the source code, there was no way for the public to know how the PCOS machines were counting their votes or whether it was their votes that were indeed being counted nationwide.

Both the public and the political parties had no way of knowing either whether the results being transmitted from the precincts were the same ones being tallied by the COMELEC. There was no mechanism in place to assess and ensure the number of votes. Because of all this, there were many easy ways to massively and secretly manipulate the electronic results of the recently concluded polls as long as one had access to the PCOS machines or to the compact flash cards being inserted into them, which contain the programs that run the machines.

Anomalies in the counting of votes emerged. An hour after the voting, the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), which served as the COMELEC's partner in the counting, was forced to temporarily stop their tallying when it noticed that the number of votes was double that of the number of voters being reported by the covered precincts.

This anomaly was immediately "rectified" by Smartmatic, the foreign-owned company that sold the PCOS machines being used. Smartmatic's foreign technician suddenly changed the source codes being used by the computers that were tallying the votes. In addition, the COMELEC arbitrarily postponed the official count for the next day, May 14, because its officials were "already tired." This is despite the

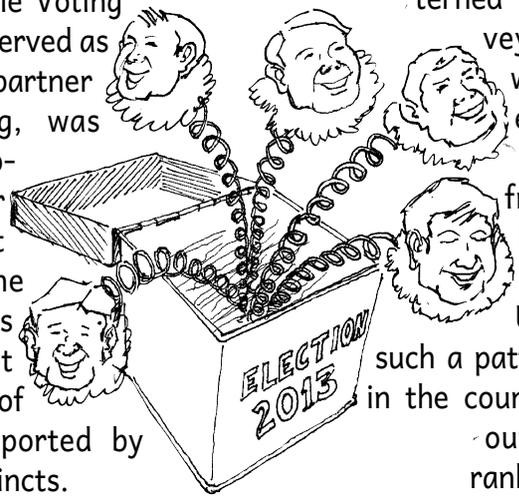
continuous stream of results from the precincts.

According to COMELEC's former director of technology, massive fraud was evident in the votes garnered by the winning senators. From the beginning, the difference of votes between the first to the 15th senator did not change. This is impossible, according to the experts at the AES, because it is not reflective of the different voting patterns in the various provinces.

In previous elections, a candidate tended to garner more votes from areas that he or she considers as "bailiwicks." As the votes came in, depending on the source, the rankings and gaps between candidates changed. But ever since the first results were released by the PPCRV up until the end, there were practically no changes in the gaps and rankings of the 15 leading candidates for senator.

It is as if the "official" list of winning candidates was "patterned" after the survey results which predicted a 9-3 outcome (nine from Team PNoy and three from UNA). With such a pattern emerging in the counting, it turns out that the rankings of, and votes garnered by, the winning senators had already been predetermined on a national scale.

In addition, it has been revealed that the technicians hired by COMELEC to supervise the PCOS machines are personnel of Placwell Manpower, a company owned by Juan Revilla, the second nominee of OFW Family Club, a party running under the partylist system. It now ranks second in the counting. **AB**



Military surfaces abducted peasant leader

The AFP surfaced peasant leader Estelita T. Tacalan, 60, ten days after her abduction in Cagayan de Oro City on April 27. This was after human rights advocates within and outside the country protested her arrest.

KARAPATAN-Northern Mindanao was able to confirm that Tacalan is currently detained at the Zamboanga del Norte Provincial Jail in Dipolog City. Tacalan, who is more popularly known as "Nanay Neneng" is a member of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and Anakpawis. The KMP said she had just come from the regional office of the Makabayan coalition in Camaman-an, Cagayan de Oro City when she was abducted by military agents. Tacalan was en route to Misamis Oriental East. Her relatives began looking for her when they discovered that she failed to arrive at her destination and could not be contacted through her cellphone.

Meanwhile, five motorcycle-riding men attempted to kill Redentor Alog, 41, in Libmanan, Camarines Sur on election day. Alog is a village councilor of Barangay Mambulo, Nuevo and a member of Anakpawis. He was leaving his house to vote when his assailants opened fire at him. He ran towards a forested area near his house to escape. **AB**

Workers resist repression

Workers have been relentlessly resisting attacks by the US-Aquino regime on their rights. In various parts of the country, unions and workers' organizations have been launching struggles to fight continuing layoffs of regular workers to bust their unions and silence their protests.

Agusan Palmoil Plantation. A day after International Labor Day, the Agusan Palmoil Plantation Inc. (API) in Trento, Agusan del Sur illegally terminated its 104 workers. This was after the company sent a notice of closure to the Department of Labor and Employment. The API did not inform its workers about its plans to put a stop to the operations of the plantation and neither did it inform their union, the Pinagbuklod na Lakas ng Manggagawa sa Plantasyon ng API (PLMPA). The union expressed incredulity at API's claims that the company was in the red due to damage sustained by the plantation because of typhoon Pablo. In fact, API earns millions annually from the production of palm oil.

The PLMPA struck in November to protest management's termination of 293 casual workers as well as other unfair labor practices. The union members have long been resisting the company's violations of their rights, such as paying them low wages, depriving them of benefits and implementing contractualization on a wide scale. A new collective bargaining agreement was forged between the union and the company on March 15. But API disregarded the CBA when it fired the remaining workers.

Brokenshire College. Teachers and staff of Brokenshire College in Davao City struck after the illegal termination of 11 clinical instructors, all of them members of

the Brokenshire College Faculty and Staff Union. The instructors said that the school was financially stable, and that there was no basis for Brokenshire to terminate them based on "projections" by management that there would be a reduction in student enrollment when the school year opens. Among those terminated was the union vice president.

Pentagon Steel Corporation. Workers of Pentagon Steel Corporation launched a series of protest pickets in April in front of their factory in Quezon City to demand safety in their workplace and negotiations for a new CBA. The workers also protested the company's refusal to recognize their union leaders elected in 2010. Instead, management continues to collude with the previous leaders of the union affiliated



with the yellow Trade Union Congress of the Philippines. The company also continues to violate the provisions of their CBA and is harassing workers who have dared to assail the company's unjust practices.

On May 12, the PSC terminated 129 workers who joined a protest action inside the factory. In response, the workers intensified their collective action and launched a series of protests outside of the factory to demand the reinstatement of the terminated workers. On April 15, the police violently attacked their protest and illegally arrested six workers. **AB**

Victorious military actions in Bicol

Red fighters in Bicol launched a series of successful military actions in the past several weeks, seizing six rifles.

Five troops of the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT)-PNP-Sorsogon City were wounded in an ambush by Red fighters of the Celso Minguez Command (CMC)-New People's Army (NPA) in Barangay Bato, Bacon District on May 10.

In Camarines Sur, members of the Eduardo Olbara Command launched a successful attack on 15 soldiers of the 49th IB stationed in Barangay Agaoao, Ragay on May 9. The soldiers fled after a ten-minute firefight.

The NPA seized an M16, a carbine and a Garand. Also confiscated was a Harris VHF Radio, hundreds of rounds of ammunition, 12 backpacks, 11 pairs of boots and 13 military uniforms. A CAFGU element was killed and a soldier and three paramilitaries wounded. There were no casualties among the Red fighters.

On the same day, NPA Red fighters in Masbate ambushed a military truck that was part of an eight-truck convoy of the 80th IB, which has been newly

deployed to reinforce the battalion assigned to the province. Initial reports indicated that the soldiers suffered several casualties.

Earlier, an NPA team raided the house of the leader of the Barangay Defense System (BDS) in Barangay Gumahang, Aroroy, Masbate on May 5. The Red fighters disarmed Roel Morales, a former policeman involved in terrorizing and repressing the people. They seized an M16 rifle, an AR 15 rifle, a carbine, a cal .45 pistol, a cal .22, a 9 mm pistol, two VHF radios and rounds of ammunition.

On April 28, an NPA team harassed the detachment of the PNP Community Police Assistance Center (CPAC) in Barangay Imalmod, Legazpi City.

Meanwhile, a unit under the Santos Binamera Command launched a harassment operation against the 2nd IB Peace and Development Team (PDT) in Barangay Bautista, Jovellar, Albay. AB

Two ambushes launched in Kalinga

Red fighters in Kalinga launched two ambushes in May that were one week apart. Ten soldiers were killed and eight were wounded in these successive military actions.

On May 15, at around 5 a.m., guerrillas of the Marcial Daggay Front (MDF) meted blows on the newly transferred and newly retrained 17th IB in Sitio Sidog, Barangay Limos, Pinukpuk. Eight soldiers were killed and two were wounded in this ambush. But the 17th IB admitted to suffering only three wounded.

Prior to this, two soldiers of the 17th IB were killed and six others were wounded in an ambush by Red fighters of the Abraham Bannawagan Front. The soldiers were aboard a military truck in Sitio Patiking, Bagumbayan, Tabuk at around 9:30 a.m. on May 9. Seized in this firefight were an M16 rifle and other military equipment. Among those killed was an intelligence officer of the 5th ID.

The NPA suffered zero casualties in these two tactical offensives.

The NPA-Kalinga clarified that the ambush was part of the program to escalate the people's war and not a result of tribal war, as the military had claimed.

NPA-Kalinga spokesperson Ka Tapon Gil-ayab belied media spins by 501st Brigade propagandists that the first ambush was an attack on democracy because the soldiers were allegedly transporting PCOS machines.

Meanwhile, the 5th ID made the laughable claim that the second ambush was undertaken because "NPA candidates and partylists" lost in the recent polls. AB

300 civilians evacuate in Negros

An estimated 300 civilians in Negros Oriental evacuated on May 16 due to massive and relentless military operations by the Philippine Army 302nd Brigade against the New People's Army (NPA).

Most of the evacuees were women and children from Sitio Lamabuanon, Barangay Fatima and Sitio Naupao, Barangay San Pedro, both in Sta. Catalina town.

The residents were forced to flee due to intense fear and because of the disruptions that the military operation has wrought on their livelihood. Previous to this, gunbattles between NPA Red fighters and 79th IB troops broke out in the afternoon of May 15.

Bt corn: Bane on the peasants

Contrary to the boastful claims recently made by the Department of Agriculture, there was no economic upliftment among small farmers planting Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) corn.

In 2002, the reactionary government promised that production costs would be reduced and incomes would rise for farmers planting Bt corn. Instead, the farmers have gone bankrupt and became even more deeply indebted because the prices of seedlings, fertilizers and pesticides needed in Bt corn cultivation continued to rise. Worse, Bt corn is a health and environmental hazard.

Corn is the second leading agricultural product in the Philippines. Bt corn has been genetically modified to combat the Asian corn borer, a pest that attacks corn fields. It releases a toxin to the soil that serves as a pesticide. Bt corn is among the genetically modified organisms (GMO) being propagated by big companies that produce seeds.

The GMO corn variety comprised 60% of the country's entire corn production in the first six months of 2012 (or more than two million metric tons out of a total harvest of more than three million metric tons).

According to a study by the IBON Foundation, the price of Bt corn seeds has risen by 282% since the variety was first sold in the country. Each 18-kilo sack costs ₱4,400-₱5,000 or almost ten times more than the ₱460 cost of a sack of ordinary corn seeds. Corn seeds account for 18-21% of the farmers' overall production costs. Expenses for fertilizer also rose by 23%. Pesticides like Roundup are now sold separately, but were previously

sold as part of seed packages.

The total cost of production of organic corn per hectare is ₱3,570 while that of Bt corn is ₱18,400. This excludes the 26% interest slapped on loans availed of by the farmers to defray production costs.

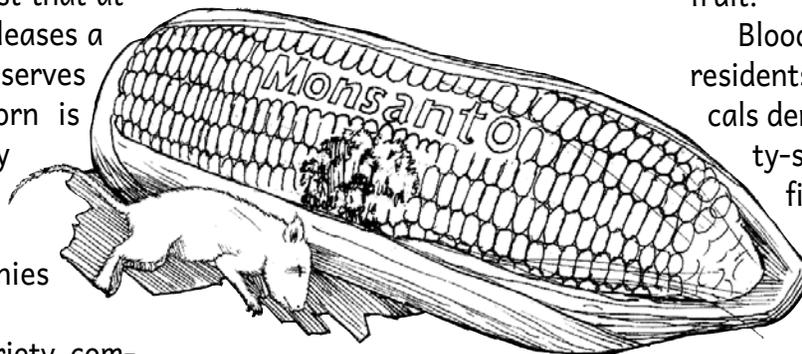
Harvests were good only in the beginning. In the course of time, the farmers needed ever bigger volumes of fertilizer and agro-chemicals because except for the corn borer, other pests that were left unscathed multiplied in number. On the other hand, the toxin from Bt corn

killed insects that were not harmful to corn like butterflies, lady bugs, bees and rootworms.

Planting Bt corn also needs ever bigger volumes of chemicals like glyphosate, a herbicide sold by Monsanto. Monsanto, alongside Syngenta are among the most aggressive promoters of Bt corn cultivation in the country.

In more than a decade of Bt corn cultivation in the Philippines, there have been deleterious effects reported on the health of residents living in communities near or within fields planted to Bt corn. In 2003, fifty-one residents age five months to 49 years in South Cotabato suffered from cough, colds, fever, vomiting, abdominal pains, headaches and breathing difficulties. Their village was located just 100 meters from a two-hectare Bt corn field that had begun to bear fruit.

Blood tests conducted on 38 residents revealed toxic chemicals derived from Bt corn. Ninety-six residents fell ill and five of them died. Their farm animals and pets were likewise poisoned. **AB**



GMO for profit

Corporate giants that produce seeds, pesticides, chemicals and pharmaceuticals control the GMO industry. They have a monopoly on the production of GMO and corresponding pesticides. The GMO industry's clear intent is to amass profits and not to help resolve the poverty and hunger stalking the majority of the peasantry.

One of these is Monsanto, an agro-chemical corporation that produces pesticides, herbicides and Bt corn seeds, aside from other genetically modified agricultural products like cotton, soybeans and peanuts. It was recently bought by Du Pont, a giant multinational that produces weapons, pharmaceuticals, bombs, chemicals and GMO. It also manufactures nuclear arms. Monsanto was behind Agent Orange, a chemical weapon used by the US in its war of intervention against Vietnam in the 1960s. **AB**

Localized talks spurned

Revolutionary forces repudiated proposals for localized peace talks currently being pushed by the Aquino regime as a "new way" of addressing the raging civil war in the country.

Both the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines in Southern Tagalog (NDF-ST) assailed the US-Aquino regime for its unilateral termination of the formal peace talks with the NDFP Negotiating Panel. They both repudiated "localized talks" and asserted that this scheme will fail to divide the revolutionary forces.

"If the US-Aquino regime is laboring under the illusion that it could entrap the revolutionary movement through localized peace talks, it is bound to wake

up to the nightmare of people's war surging throughout the archipelago," said NDFP-ST spokesperson Patnubay de Guia.

CPDF spokesperson Simeon "Ka Filiw" Naogsan, meanwhile, said that all the Aquino government wants in engaging in peace talks with the NDFP is not the resolution of the armed conflict but the capitulation of the revolutionary armed units.

At the end of April, Aquino's peace negotiators declared that they would no longer talk with the NDFP and start a "new way" of dealing with the revolutionary movement. The "new way" consists of localized peace talks with groups purported to be revolutionary, fake surrenders and cash doleouts through programs like the Con-

ditional Cash Transfer and Pamana. Most of these monies will end up lining the pockets of corrupt government officials and military commanders.

Naogsan and De Guia expressed their unity with the entire revolutionary movement in recognizing the officials of the NDFP Negotiating Panel and in demanding that the negotiations be conducted at the national level in order to resolve the roots of the civil war in the country.

The CPDF called on all minority peoples to persevere and to strengthen mass struggles to defend their ancestral lands, livelihoods, rights and resources.

The NDFP-ST, on the other hand, declared that "there is no other recourse but to persevere in the armed revolution, continue gaining strength and bring the people's war to the strategic stalemate until total victory." **AB**

CPI (M) expresses solidarity with Philippine revolution

The members of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) or CPI(M) observed Solidarity Week in support of the Philippine revolution. Indian revolutionaries expressed their firm support for the Philippine revolution and the Filipino people. They also condemned and opposed the Aquino regime's Oplan Bayanihan.

In a statement, the CPI(M) Central Committee

said, "The masses of the Philippines and the New People's Army are heroically resisting an unjust and barbarous war." During the week-long solidarity activity, the CPI(M) published a booklet introducing the Philippine revolutionary movement. The booklet discussed the situation and history of the Philippines and provides information on the current stage of the Philippine revolution. **AB**