

ANG

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Editorial

Expose and oppose the revival of the cha-cha scheme

Right after the elections, the Aquino clique immediately floated the idea of charter change (cha-cha or amending the reactionary 1987 constitution). The ruling clique clearly wants to take advantage of its majority control over the senate and the lower house of congress in order to push through with cha-cha.

As before, House Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr. served as point man. And as usual, Aquino feigned lack of interest in cha-cha, after noticing the public's somber reaction to Belmonte's proposal. But neither did Aquino openly oppose the idea.

Aquino's minions will surely broach cha-cha anew in the not so distant future because it is what their master has ordered and it is in keeping with the interests of their closest allies. The US and the various factions of the ruling class want new laws and policies that

would make the Philippines even more enticing to foreign investors. This means making it even easier for foreigners to extract the Philippines' natural resources and exploit its cheap labor. The Aquino regime's entire economic program revolves around the same precepts—relying on and being servile to foreign debt and investments.

The Ramos, Estrada and Arroyo regimes tried various means and schemes to railroad cha-cha. But they all failed in the face of the people's fierce opposition. The unrelenting crisis besetting the US economy

and the US' need to expand its sources of raw materials and labor are driving it to push the Aquino regime to accomplish what the previous three regimes failed to do.

Towards this end, major monopoly capitalist organizations, among them the American and European Chambers of Commerce have, in recent months, been pushing for the removal of restrictions on foreign investments stipulated in the reactionary 1987 constitution. Among these restrictions are bans on foreign ownership of land and limits on foreign control over enterprises to a mere 40%. No less than US ambassador Harry Thomas has articulated the US government position. Without batting an eyelash, he has called for



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amendments to the Philippine constitution as a condition for the country to join the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement.

The call for cha-cha is being made despite the existence of scores of laws, policies and executive orders that already effectively grant foreign investors free rein to lord it over the entire Philippine financial system, plunder and siphon off local resources, exploit cheap labor and pocket superprofits to the detriment of domestic capital formation, the development of local industry, land distribution and the overall welfare of the Filipino people.

Among these laws are the Omnibus Investment Code of 1987, the Foreign Investments Act of 1991, the Banking Liberalization Law of 1994, the Build-Operate-Transfer Law of 1994, the Mining Act of 1995, the Oil Deregulation Law of 1997 and the Investment House Liberalization Law of 1997.

For more than six decades, the Philippines has depended

on foreign investments and debt as key components of the economic program of the neo-colonial reactionary state. But they have not spurred the creation of a dynamic and self-reliant economy capable of manufacturing the people's basic needs. Instead, they have stunted and destroyed local production and manufacturing.

US imperialism also wants to remove constitutional prohibitions on the presence and basing of foreign military forces and nuclear weapons in the country so it could unimpededly use the Philippines to expand its military hegemony in the Asia-Pacific.

The Filipino people must be vigilant regarding the various ways and forms that the Aquino regime will utilize in railroading the cha-cha, now or in the future. They must unite to resist this looming scheme because the proposed amendments will further ruin the Filipino people economically, further obstruct national industrialization and genuine land reform, worsen

the people's oppression and exploitation and further trample on Philippine sovereignty.

The revolutionary movement has a comprehensive program for the transformation of the local economy from its present backward, pre-industrial and foreign investment and foreign debt-dependent state towards one that is modern, developed and of service to the people. This is contained in the draft agreement on socio-economic reforms submitted by the National Democratic Front in its peace negotiations with the Government of the Philippines. The talks, however, have been arbitrarily and unilaterally suspended by the US-Aquino regime. There is currently no indication that the regime's antinational, anti-democratic and pro-imperialist character will change. Even as the revolutionary movement remains open to the peace talks, it stands ready to continue advancing the peoples' war to attain socio-economic reforms that will truly benefit the people. **AE**



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Exposés of electoral fraud continue

The Filipino people continue to denounce anomalies in the vote counting, violations by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) of electoral laws and other maneuvers to manipulate the results of the recently concluded elections.

On May 26, the AES Watch called for an independent investigation on counting anomalies. They asked the COMELEC and

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the Joint Congressional Oversight on AES to investigate all PCOS machines, ballots and other electoral paraphernalia. They also demanded that COMELEC chairman Sixto Brilliantes disclose how the COMELEC used its ₱30-million intelligence fund. Brilliantes had mentioned that the agency used the funds to spy on groups opposing the automated election system and Smartmatic's role in the process. One of the groups he accused of sabotaging the elections was AES Watch. The AES also raised questions on the COMELEC's decision to delay the count on the night of May 13 and the five-day delay in counting 20% of the votes from various provinces.

According to the group, it only takes a few

days for the COMELEC to be able to falsify the certificates of canvass and ensure that the counting of votes is in line with the predetermined results. A pattern of 60-30-10 for the senatorial elections has already emerged from the national canvassing.

Vote manipulation is most apparent in the partylist system elections. Migrante and Kabataan Partylist filed protests on the low or zero vote counts they obtained in their stronghold precincts immediately after voting was closed. According to the groups, such brazen vote-shaving was an extension of the threats and persecution carried out by the regime to ensure that progressive parties are kept out of congress. AB

Student journalists fight for campus press freedom

Student journalists under the College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP) denounced the widespread and worsening violations of campus press freedom. At the same time, they called for the immediate rejection of Republic Act 7079 or the Campus Journalism Act of 1991 which is being used to attack their rights extensively and indiscriminately.

In various parts of the country, campus press freedom is being suppressed through censorship, withholding of funds, non-collection of funds, libel cases or outright closure of campus papers. Concomitant to this, the harassment of student journalists has been stepped up, especially of those who are critical and who dare to denounce antistudent policies and programs of school capitalist owners and the US-Aquino regime.

Most notable is the case of *Dawn*, the University of the East's publication. Since 2012, the school's administration has stopped collecting publication fees. When the paper came out with a lampoon issue, the UE administration slapped it with a libel case. The *Pedon*, publication

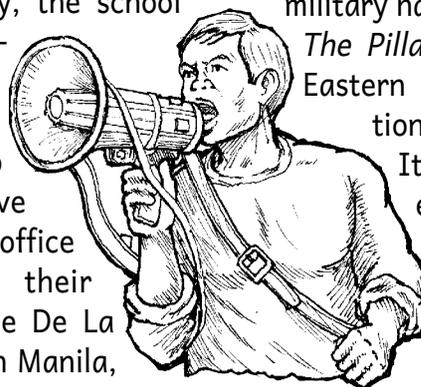
of the Mindanao State University-Marawi Campus College of Agriculture, is also slowly being shut down. As in the case of UE, the administration has stopped collecting publication fees.

At the Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (EARIST), the students have successfully thwarted the administration's move to shut down the EARIST *Technozette*. At the Quezon City Polytechnic University, the school president meddled with the publication of the *Monthly Quest* to oust its staff, drive them out of their office and confiscate their equipment. At the De La Salle University in Manila,

Jesso Go, *The La Sallian's* editor-in-chief, was charged in court after he wrote an article questioning the school's income-generating activities. The school has also revoked his honor student status.

When schools fail to shut down publications, they resort to persecuting individual journalists by charging them with libel. A prominent example is the libel case filed against Jesusa Paquibot, editor-in-chief of *Outcrop*, publication of the University of the Philippines-Baguio, in relation to an article she wrote about a professor. Paquibot garnered widespread support and the case was dismissed by a local court.

Student journalists are also susceptible to the state's campaign of violence against its detractors. In Eastern Visayas, the military has placed the staff of *The Pillar*, the University of Eastern Philippines' publication, under surveillance. It placed the paper's editors and staff on its order of battle. The military also spied on the publication's office. AB



K+12 will not resolve widespread unemployment

Youth groups as well as teachers and parents' groups vehemently condemned Benigno Aquino III's insidious signing last May 15 of the Enhanced Education Act of 2013, more commonly known as K+12. This formalized the program which requires a year of kindergarten and 12 years of basic education (six years of elementary education, four years of junior high school and two years of senior high school.)

They also condemned the lie being peddled by the regime that K+12 would resolve the country's widespread unemployment problem by providing students with the "correct skills" while they are still in high school. The only thing the program ensures is the massive supply of cheap labor for companies in the Philippines and overseas.

A study by Ibon Foundation belies the government's pronouncement that unemployment among the educated is caused by a job-skills mismatch. In 2012, eight out of ten of the unemployed were high school graduates or had college-level units. According to the National Statistics Office (NSO), three out of ten

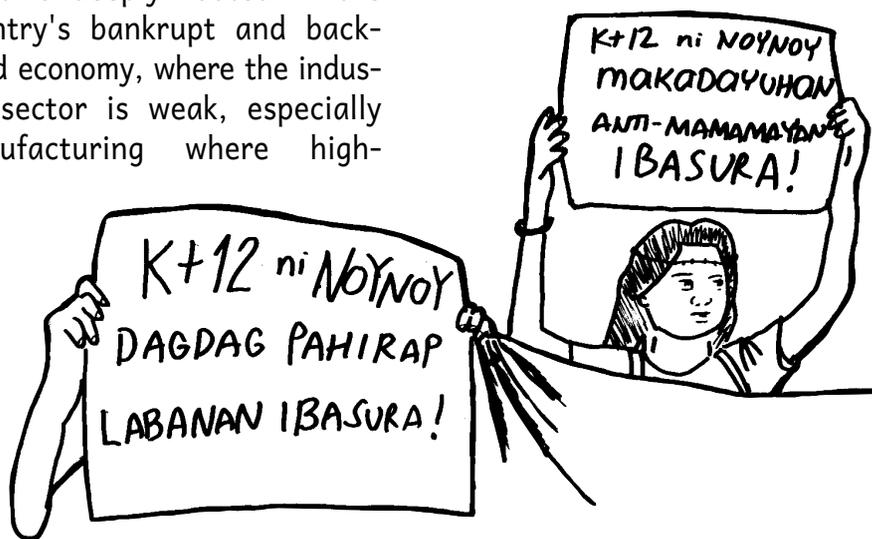
unemployed were either college graduates or had post-graduate units.

Young Filipinos have difficulty finding work because of insufficient jobs in the country, and not because they don't have the appropriate skills. Unemployment is deeply rooted in the country's bankrupt and backward economy, where the industry sector is weak, especially manufacturing where high-

skilled jobs are created. Currently, most jobs are low-skill and exploitative in nature.

With most parents unemployed, they are unable to send their children to school either under the previous ten-year basic education program or Aquino's 12-year program.

Worse, the budget for education is sorely lacking. Teacher shortages, as well as the lack of classrooms, books and other materials are sure to worsen upon the K+12's implementation. AB



NPA seizes 11 firearms in gunbattles

Red Fighters of the New People's Army seized 11 high-powered rifles in various successful tactical offensives in Southern Mindanao and Albay province on May 20-21. Meanwhile, up to 30 soldiers were killed in various NPA military actions in Northcentral Mindanao Region and Albay in May.

In Southern Mindanao Region. Eight high-powered rifles, comprising an M4 (5.56) semi-automatic rifle, three baby armalites, two M16s and two 12-gauge shotguns were seized by Red Fighters from the ComVal-Davao Gulf Subregional Command and ComVal-Davao East Coast Subregional Command in a raid on the headquarters of the DASIA Security Agency at Dr. Juan Gonzales St., Orange Valley Village, Tagum City at 7:45 p.m. of

May 20. They also seized ammunition, magazines and ammunition and bullet proof vests. The DASIA headquarters is located less than a kilometer away from the Philippine National Police-Davao del Norte Provincial Headquarters and its Tagum City station.

Disarming the DASIA Security Agency serves as a punitive measure on its owner, the Escandor family, for seizing the lands of the Matigsalug Lumad tribe in Barangay Salumanay and Sitio Marahan in Marilog District and the Ubos tribe in Baracatan, Toril District, both in Davao City.

The NPA withdrew safely after the daring 15-minute raid without firing a single shot. It took the enemy ten hours before it could send a reaction team to the area.

In anticipation of military pursuit operations, the Red fighters prepared two attritive actions which dealt huge casualties on the enemy.

An NPA unit used command-detonated explosives (CDX) against 66th IB troops who were aboard a KM450 military truck traversing the highway in Barangay Pandapan, Tagum City at about 6:15 a.m. on May 21.

After two hours, Red Fighters detonated another CDX which destroyed an armored personnel carrier (APC) in Sitio Tagmanok, Barangay Tuburan, Mawab, Compostela Valley. The incident took place a mere two kilometers away from the headquarters of the 10th ID.

In Albay. Fighters from the Santos Binamera Command-New People's Army (SBM-NPA) seized a K3 light machine gun, two M16s and bullets in an ambush against a squad under the 2nd IB Charlie Company on patrol in Sitio Mamara, Barangay del Rosario, Camalig on May 20. Three soldiers were killed, including their team leader, while a soldier was seriously wound-

ed. At the same time, another unit of the SBM-NPA launched harassment operations against a detachment of the 2nd IB located at the center of the said barangay. The NPA suffered zero casualties in both battles.

In Northcentral Mindanao. Red fighters launched a new series of military actions in different parts of the region which resulted in 27 soldiers killed and several others wounded. This was the revolutionary movement's response to the deployment of the Marine Battalion Landing Team-3 to Northcentral Mindanao after the US-Aquino regime boasted of destroying the growing revolutionary movement in the region.

Ten enemy elements were killed while a Red Fighter was martyred after members of the NPA launched harassment operations against the 58th IB and Marines who were aboard six six-by-six trucks in Barangay Lawit, Gingoog City on May 11.

Before the incident, two soldiers were killed when an NPA unit opened fire at the CAA-AFP detachment in Km 11, Tapnigue,

Barangay Sangay, Buenavista, Agusan del Norte on May 10.

NPA fighters launched two harassment operations against the 58th IB and Marines joint operation in Barangay Samay, Gingoog City on May 9. A soldier was killed during the first operation and two soldiers in the second. The Red Fighters also launched harassment operations against 58th IB troops in Sitio Sabangan, Barangay San Luis, Malitbog, Bukidnon.

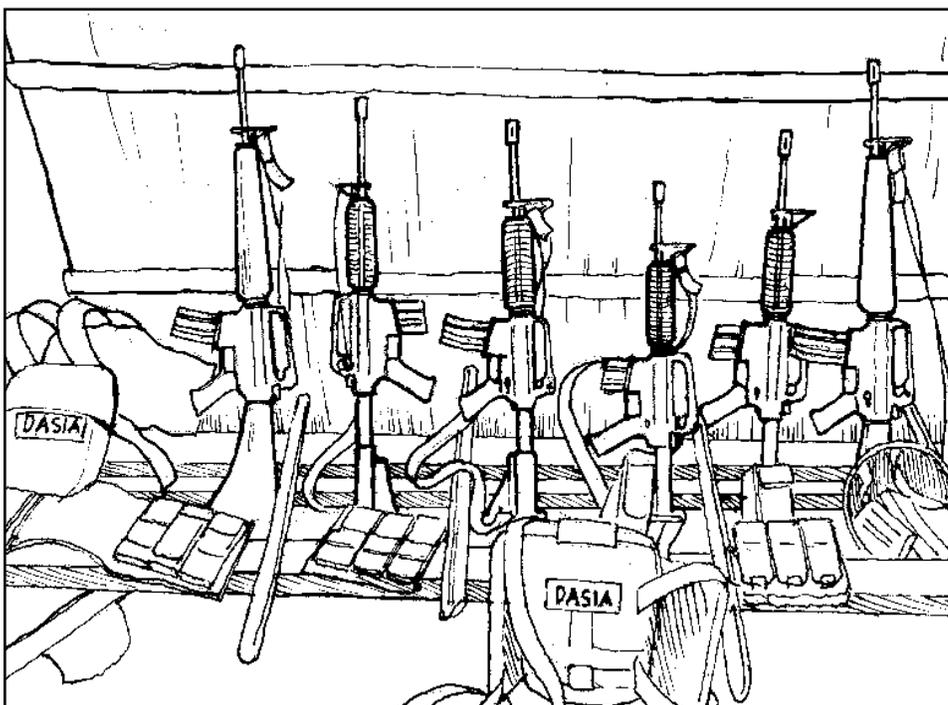
Seven soldiers were likewise killed when NPA Red Fighters opened fire at a command post of the 18th IB in Barangay Salawagan, Quezon, Bukidnon on May 7.

A soldier was killed when NPA fighters harassed a Scout Rangers unit in Barangay Mahagsay, San Luis, Agusan del Sur on May 5.

Three soldiers were killed in NPA harassment operations against a Scout Ranger unit undertaking strike operations while aboard 12 motorcycles in Barangay Mahagsay, San Luis, Agusan del Sur on May 4.

A soldier was killed and seven others wounded when an NPA team overcame an attack by a column of the 8th IB and Scout Rangers in Barangay Busdi, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon on May 3. A Red Fighter was martyred in this battle.

In Abra. Three soldiers belonging to the 41st IB were killed and many others were wounded in an NPA ambush in Mabolo, Gacab, Malibcong on May 30. Elements of the 41st IB first fired on the NPA's sentry while the Red fighters were temporarily encamped in the area. The NPA managed to withdraw safely and ambushed the soldiers involved in the pursuit operations four hours later. **AB**



Successful antifeudal actions in Negros Oriental

Up to 450 peasant families benefited from successful antifeudal actions launched by more than 100 farmers in Barangay Buenavista, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental on April 20. Farmers, drivers, the youth and middle forces from the village dialogued with landlords such as Mayor Ernesto Reyes, Lila Bustamante and Fredo Javier.

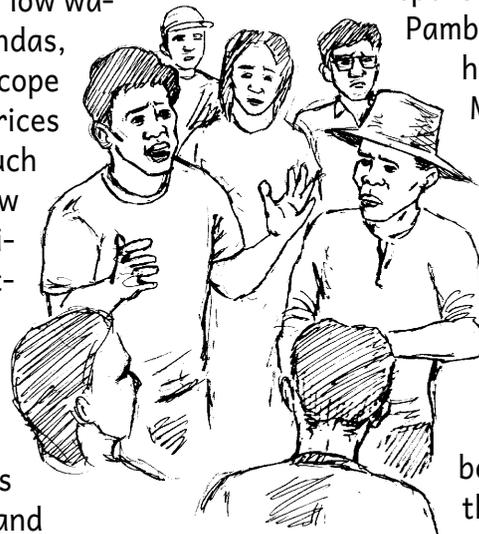
After the farmers presented their demand for a wage increase, the landlords had a heated argument among themselves. Fredo Javier and Lila Bustamante were the first to give in to the farmers' demand, with Mayor Ernesto Reyes the last.

Due to the campaign, the wages of peasants working in sugar cane plantations were raised from ₱120 to ₱150 daily. Wages for cutting and hauling sugar also increased from ₱180 to ₱250 per ton. From ₱80, the daily wage for tilling the land was raised to ₱100 daily for men. Wages for women remained at ₱80 but the work day for them and all other hacienda workers was reduced from eight to seven hours.

The campaign influenced a wide area, prompting other landlords to raise wages to the same level.

For decades, farmers endured eight hours of backbreaking work everyday, come rain or shine, in exchange for low wages.

Due to the very low wages in the haciendas, farmers could not cope with the rising prices of commodities such as rice, which now sells at ₱35-50/kilo. This has resulted in high malnutrition rates among children, lack of education, growing numbers of child workers and



the prevalence of diseases brought about by heavy workloads and the scarcity of food and medicine.

The Department of Labor and Employment has been useless in countering the landlords and hacenderos' illegal wage system. Likewise, Aquino's landlord government has failed to provide farm workers with livelihood services.

They have thus pooled their strength to fight for their interests. They have garnered widespread support from farmers of neighboring villages, enough to launch a campaign for wage increases in other haciendas.

According to Julian Mabini, spokesperson of the Pambansang Kaisahan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM)-Central Negros, this is but an initial victory, with more actions of this kind to be launched in the future.

AB

Coke workers successfully assert regularization

Drivers, forklift operators and pickers from the Coca Cola plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna successfully asserted their status as regular workers on May 22. This came about after they launched a three-day strike. They also successfully compelled management to recognize their union, the Unyon ng mga Manggagawang Driver, Forklift Operator at Picker (UMDFP).

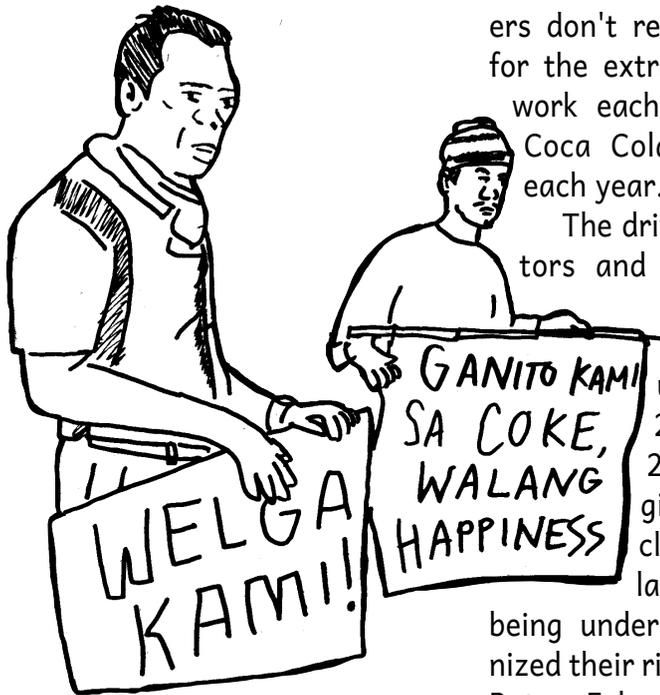
The 300-strong UMDFP, together with their families and supporters launched their strike on May 20. The Sta. Rosa Coca Cola plant is the biggest of its kind in Asia. It employs 1,000 workers, ex-

cluding the 300 involved in product distribution who are members of the UMDFP. The strike is the first to be launched in the said plant.

According to the UMDFP president, "While Coca Cola is acting like it is pro-environment and pro-consumer in its multi-million peso ads, it denies its own workers their basic rights to wages, safety and health, job security and their right to self-organization."

Intense exploitation and oppression

The union launched the strike mainly to protest



the company's unfair labor practices. This includes the contractualization of 430 workers who have been with the Sta. Rosa plant as regular workers for more than a decade, its refusal to recognize their union and the withholding of their benefits.

On 2010, Coca Bottlers Philippines Inc (CCBPI) placed all its workers in its Sta. Rosa plant under The Red System Inc (TRCI), a private recruitment agency. The union is almost sure that CCBPI owns TRCI, an illegal arrangement. CCBPI used the agency to implement wage cuts and remove workers' benefits such as overtime pay, 13th month pay, rice allowance and other incentives that they have been receiving as regular workers.

Company drivers are not paid by the day. They receive ₱425 for every delivery instead. They don't make deliveries every day. Their wages don't vary even if deliveries take more than eight hours. Often, their earnings amount to only ₱4,000/month. Forklift operators are paid ₱330 and pickers ₱315 for every 12-hour workday. In Laguna, the minimum wage is pegged at ₱327 for an eight-hour work day. The work-

ers don't receive overtime pay for the extra three hours they work each day. In contrast, Coca Cola rakes in billions each year.

The drivers, forklift operators and pickers petitioned the the DOLE regional office for union recognition in 2012. In January 2013, the DOLE's regional office declared them as regular workers, despite being under TRCI, and recognized their right to form a union. But on February, the DOLE's national office nullified the decision. At the same time, TRCI organized a pro-management union and affiliated it with the Federation of Free Workers. It tried to bribe the workers with large signing bonuses to tempt them into signing up with the yellow union.

Victory in militant action

On the second day of the strike, CCBPI threatened to disperse the picket line after it was able to secure a temporary re-

straining order against the striking workers. The local government sided with Coca Cola's assessment that the strike is harming the company. It gave the workers 72 hours to dismantle the picket line before calling in the police to disperse them. The workers persevered despite Laguna's long history of violence against strikes and workers.

Because of this, management was forced to enter into an agreement before the 72-hour deadline. It agreed to once again recognize the members of the UMDFP as regular workers. They will be receiving the benefits provided to them by the CCBPI as per their collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Plus, the company promised to give each worker ₱15,000 as financial aid and rice worth ₱9,000.

By the afternoon of May 22, the union declared their strike victorious. But, as always, they know that their struggles are not yet over, as the company can delay or revoke the concessions it provided in the signed agreement. AB

Advan shoes and Luneta Park workers launch protest

Workers from Advan Shoes and vendors from Luneta Park launched a joint protest in front of Malacañang last May 22 to denounce the US-Aquino regime's failure to resolve issues faced by more and more workers in the country. They condemned the capitalists' continuing attacks on their right to decent employment, the lack of just wages and benefits, job security and workers' right to form unions.

At the same time, Advan Shoes workers condemned the Bleu-star Manufacturing Corporation (BMC) for arbitrarily shutting down its Muntinlupa factory. Management claimed that it could no longer run the factory at full capacity. It claims it no longer has the capability to procure raw materials and that sales are slow. Two hundred and ten workers were laid off because of this.

Since January 2013, the BMC has no longer provided regular work to its workers. Most of them were called to work for only 69 days within a five month period. According to the Bleustar Workers Labor Union (BLWU), what the company is carrying out is tantamount to an illegal shut-down. It is projecting losses, and thus, projecting the factory's eventual shutdown. It seeks to weaken the workers' position on the upcoming negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement in July.

The workers know that the company is not los-

ing even when they are not being called to work. From January to August last year, they were obliged to work overtime to increase production by up to 50% daily. Products from this period are enough to cover the demands of the market even if current production is limited.

Meanwhile, Luneta Park vendors denounced their arbitrary eviction from the park. They condemned the confiscation of their wares and the criminalization of their livelihood upon the orders of the Department of Tourism which were violently implemented by the police. AB

Military kills civilian and activist in Albay and ComVal

A civilian in Albay was mercilessly killed while a coordinator of a progressive partylist group was killed in Compostela Valley. Meanwhile, military harassment of Ilocos-Cordillera leaders goes on unabated.

May 26. Death squad elements of the 2nd IBPA killed Ricky Nate, a fish vendor and resident of Barangay Cotmon in Camalig, Albay. He was killed in front of a church in the village center of Barangay Del Rosario in Camalig. The area lies near the detachment of the 2nd IB Charlie Company.

In 2012, Nate was repeatedly warned and threatened by 1Lieutenant Sason, chief of the 2nd IB Charlie Company. Sason accused Nate of helping the revolutionary movement. Nate reported Sason to the barangay authorities which brokered talks, with the help of the local government. During these talks, Sason promised to stop harassing Nate.

The military is virtually bragging about killing Nate by continuing operations in his village.

May 25. An Anakpawis Party municipal coordinator was killed in Mawab, Compostela Valley. Eddie Canon, 43 and a resident

of Purok 4B, Nuevo Iloco, Mawab, was killed by men suspected to be from the military.

Canon was on his way home after paying his electricity bill when he was accosted by two men riding in tandem on a motorcycle without license plates. He was shot using a .45 pistol and suffered 13 gunshot wounds to the head and body.

Before the incident, a Sergeant Castillo and two other men identified with the 66th IB had been harassing Canon. Anakpawis strongly condemned the killing, saying it was done to suppress mass actions taken by the people of Compostela Valley to denounce government inaction on the plight of the victims of typhoon Pablo which struck the province and surrounding areas in 2012.

April and May. The 86th IB has been harassing leaders of progressive groups in the Ilocos-Cordillera region without

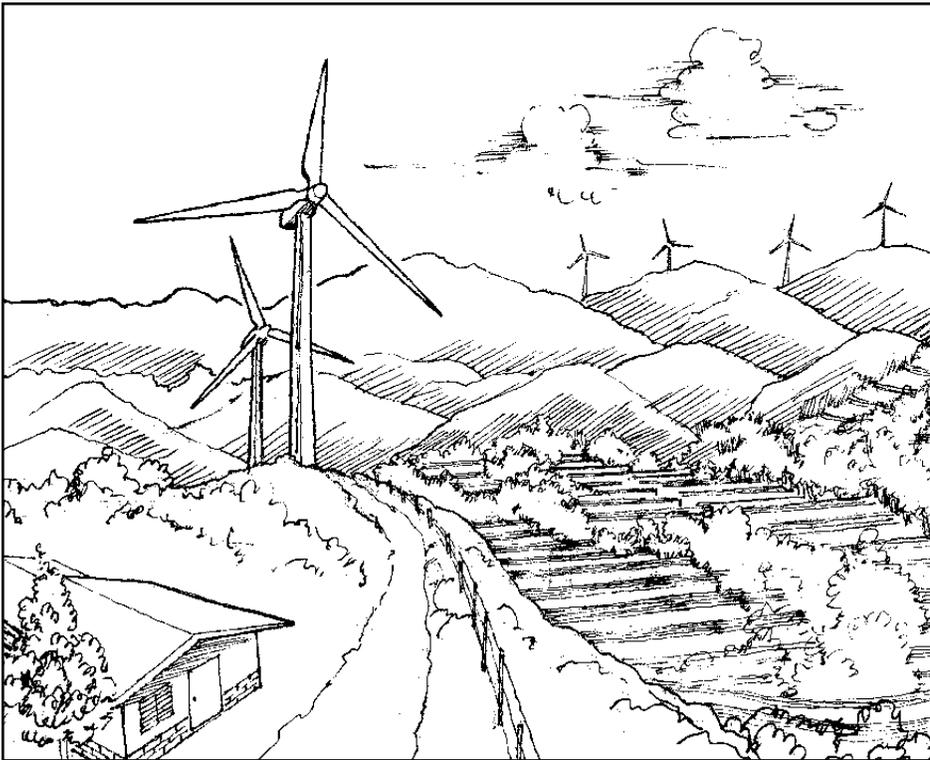
letup.

Willy Kuan, a development worker from the Regional Development Center-Katinnulong Daguiti Umili ti Amianan a Luzon received a threatening text message in April. Meanwhile, Claudine Panayo and Fernando Alikes of the Ifugao Resource Development Center were placed under surveillance the month before.

The Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA)-KARAPATAN has expressed its concern over these incidents. In October 2012, the 5th ID released a document entitled "Municipality of Tinoc (Target Persons)" where Ilocos-Cordillera progressive groups and their leaders were listed for surveillance and harassment. A series of arrests, including those of mass leaders Greyson Naogsan, Rene Boy Avida and Virgilio Corpus followed soon after the document's existence was disclosed.

Charges were also filed against CHRA secretary-general Jude Baggo and Mildred Goyagoy, Avida's wife and former officer of KARAPATAN. AB

Opposition against wind farm project in Sagada-Besao



National minority communities are up in arms against a wind farm project slated to be put up in their areas. The project seeks to build giant turbines to produce electricity using wind power. Besides endangering their communities, the project challenges the community ownership of ancestral lands and imperils the people's livelihood.

According to the Sagada-Besao Wind Watch and Sagada and Besao Concerned Citizens, large tracts of land must be excavated to put up the turbines, including in areas that serve as community watersheds. Since the turbines need to be erected along high cliffs, they may also cause landslides in the communities directly below them.

The residents say that Philcarbon, the company which is in charge of the project, failed to present a study on the possible dangers of putting up turbines in their land. Neither did it inform them of its plans to construct wide roads needed to transport their trucks and con-

struction supplies. The residents also fear that their livelihoods will be affected since most of the current roads are narrow and lie near their farms and houses.

Philcarbon justifies the construction of the wind farm by saying that it will supply Mountain Province's electricity needs. But there are already two existing hydroelectric projects which produce more than enough of the province's needs. Philcarbon also promised to pay P13,000 to each affected barangay, P113,000 to each provincial government and P63,000 to each municipality for every kilowatt produced.

This is a paltry sum compared to the P165 million annual windfall Philcarbon expects to gain.

Besao and Sagada residents have made it clear that they don't readily allow big companies in their areas. They first make sure that the project will really serve the interests of the majority and not just exist for the profit-making objectives of local or foreign companies. They demanded that Philcarbon disclose its real owners and investors.

Meantime, 100 Sagada tourist guides and residents launched a protest to enforce public ownership of the Kiltapan tourist spot in Sagada. The protesters destroyed the new fence and gate at the road leading to Kiltapan peak erected by Wilson Capuyan, who claims ownership of the area.

Kiltapan peak has been declared the "Kiltapan Picnic Ground and View Deck" through Sagada Municipal Ordinance No. 01-2009. The ordinance recognizes the area as public property and bans its privatization. It also recognizes the property as part of the ancestral land of the Kilong, Tetep-an Sur and Norte and Antadao (KILTEPAN) minorities. But there are greedy individuals who wish to own the land. Among them, Wilson Capuyan is the most persistent. Residents are also aware that the Sagada local government had a hand in the matter. They fear that if they leave the issue alone, Kiltapan peak will fall victim to commercialism. **AB**

Residents barricade geothermal plant in Davao

A thousand residents barricaded the road leading up to the Mt. Apo Geothermal Plants in Kidapawan City last May 30 to show their disgust at the daily brownouts that have been plaguing their communities. They took to task the Energy Development Corporation, the company which has been running the plant, for its refusal to address the city's electricity shortage. According to law, an energy company is obliged to supply 25% of its electricity production to the local government in the town where its plant is located.

The daily brownouts began when the EDC arbitrarily reduced the amount of electricity it supplies to the Cotabato Electric Cooperative by 30%. The Mt. Apo Geothermal Plants, which are owned the Lopez family, have a 104-megawatt capacity.

The barricaders came from the communities of Magpet, Arakan Valley, Makilala, Tulunan, Kabacan and Pres. Roxas. They condemned the EDC, as well as the Philippine National Oil Corporation, which once promised cheap and abundant electricity supply, for surreptitiously pushing for the construction of the plants despite the people's protests. Since the 1990s, national minorities living in the area have been opposed to the widespread environmental destruction that the construction of the plants entailed. **AB**

Latest maneuvers in HLI

The Cojuangco-Aquino family, with the connivance of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), has relentlessly been scheming to delay and prevent the distribution of land in Hacienda Luisita. In the latest of these maneuvers, HLI has reduced the land area to be distributed, delayed the independent audit of both Hacienda Luisita Inc (HLI) and its subsidiary Centenary Holdings Inc., and raised the land valuation.

According to recent Land Bank documents obtained by the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), the land area to be distributed by the HLI has been reduced from the original 4,915 hectares to only 3,336 hectares. This will result in only half a hectare of land for each beneficiary. The KMP likewise found out that the Aquino regime has paid ₱230.65 million or ₱67,957.21/hectare for 500 hectares of HLI land, an amount far exceeding the ₱40,000/hectare valuation made by the Cojuangco-Aquinos themselves in 1989. This raises the beneficiaries' amortization payments severalfold.

At the same time, the DAR, with the collusion of the Department of Agriculture and Sugar Regulatory Authority, is now pushing the sugar block farming scheme. Under this scheme, beneficiaries are encouraged to organize block farms by consolidating land under 30 hectares. The beneficiaries will theoretically retain ownership of the land but will be employed as farm workers by their own organization. The block farms will be funded by the HLI through such schemes as partnerships, contract growing, joint ventures and the like.

To make the offer more palatable, the DAR has promised assistance and support to beneficiaries. This is no different from the stock distribution option (SDO) scheme implemented by Corazon Aquino's regime. In both schemes, the Cojuangco-Aquino family dictates what crops to plant and where to plant them. The family likewise controls how much the farm workers should charge for their produce.

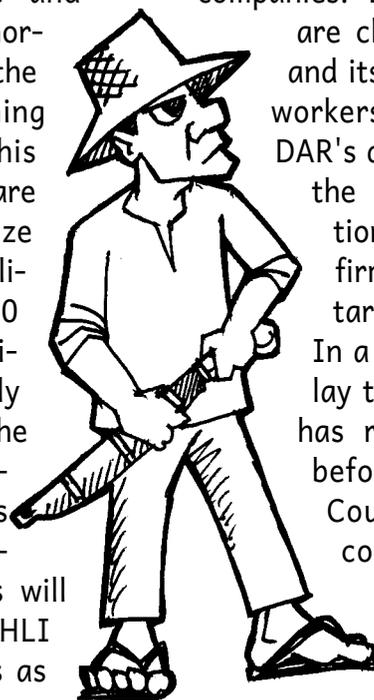
The Cojuangco-Aquino family has also been relentless in its efforts to delay and eventually stop the independent audit of the HLI and Centenary Holdings. It insists on procuring the services of KPMG and Reyes Tancandong & Co to audit the two companies. Both corporations

are close to the family and its companies. Farm workers denounced the DAR's decision to consult the HLI in the selection of the auditing firm, since HLI is the target of the audit.

In a further bid to delay the audit, the DAR has raised the matter before the Supreme Court. The DAR is confident that the

Supreme Court will rule in its favor since Chief Justice

Ma. Lourdes Sereno is close to Benigno Aquino III. **AB**



Protests in Europe spread

Youth and workers' protests against worsening poverty and unemployment continue to spread in different parts of Europe.

Last May, protests broke out in Stockholm, Sweden after police arbitrarily killed a Portuguese immigrant inside his home. The incident sparked protests among Sweden's immigrant youth. They condemned the authorities' worsening discrimination against them in Sweden, the widespread unemployment among their ranks and the reduction of social services to their communities.

Protests have been widespread in Husby, a town with an 80% immigrant population. Most immigrants here are families who have escaped the turmoil in their respective countries of origin. Immigrants comprise 15% of Sweden's population of 9.5 million.

For a long time, Sweden has prided itself in being a "model" in providing social services to its citizens. But since the 1990s, its continual reduction of funds for social services has widened the gap between capitalists and workers, as well as between Swedes and immigrants. This has further been exacerbated by Europe's general crisis. In the past

few years alone, Sweden's unemployment rate has risen to 8.1%. Most of those without jobs and struggling to make ends meet are young immigrants who lack education, unable to find work and are neglected by the Swedish government.

At the same time, protests also broke out in Switzerland, another country hitherto known for providing ample social services to its citizens. More than a thousand young people launched a protest to denounce unemployment and state reduction of social services. They say the Swiss government's antiyouth and antipeople policies have resulted in commercialism and the enrichment of the few. From zero, unemployment has steadily grown to 3.1% and is still on the rise. Most of those without work are immigrants.

Joblessness is not confined to Sweden and Switzerland. Unemployment rates have steadily risen all over Europe, rising from 10% in 2010 to an unprecedented

12.2% in 2013. People's protests have spread against a system that neglects their welfare but bails out big capitalists. Unemployment is highest in Greece (27%), Cyprus (15%), Spain (42%) and Portugal (18%). In these countries, unemployment is worst among the youth. Youth unemployment is at 62.5% in Greece, 56% in Spain and 40% in Italy. Protests and general strikes persist in these countries.

Meanwhile, protests in Turkey spread in the first week of June after police violently dispersed a peaceful protest in defense of Kizilay Square, a small park in Ankara, the country's capital. Three protesters were killed and 3,195 wounded in the demonstrations conducted since May 28. The rallyists condemned state fascism and demanded the immediate ouster of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Mass protests immediately spread to Turkey's 67 provinces. On July 5, KESK, the federation of government employees' unions called for a two-day general strike against the Erdogan regime's fascism. The federation has 240,000 employees under its wing. AB



NDFP expresses solidarity with Basque workers

The National Democratic of the Philippines expressed its solidarity with the Basque workers on the day of their general strike last May 30. LAB or the Nationalist Workers' Committee and other trade unions struck to call the Spanish government's attention to the widespread job losses and huge budget cuts for social services like health, education and housing. This was the sixth strike launched by the trade unions in four years.

Thousands marched in the Basque Country's capital to denounce the governments of Spain

and France and their regional governments as well, for toeing the antipeople and antiworker lines set by big banks and the IMF-WB.

Simultaneously, the Basque people asserted their right to self-determination. The NDFP expressed solidarity with the Basque people in their quest for a different model for their country.

The Basque people are national minorities living in the Basque Country and Navarre in Spain and in the Northern Basque Country in France. Spain and France now consider their respective occupied regions as autonomous provinces.

Bt eggplant growing averted

THE Court of Appeals (CA) upheld a decision permanently stopping field testing of *Bacillus thuringiensis* or "Bt eggplant" nationwide last May 17. The CA said that there is no law regulating the field testing of genetically modified plants. In such cases, the "precautionary principle" or the immediate preemption of any project that might seriously threaten and cause grave harm to the environment operates.

The CA also ordered Mahyco, a subsidiary of the multinational firm Monsanto to rehabilitate the farms used for Bt eggplant field testing. Among the entities charged and held accountable by the CA are the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, University of the Philippines (UP) Los Baños Foundation Inc., UP Mindanao Foundation Inc. and the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications.

At the same time, two million people in 52 countries and 436 cities launched protests last May 25 against Monsanto, the main producer of genetically modified seeds and food. Genetically modified plants come from seeds whose composition has been genetically altered to make them resistant to insects and herbicides.

Funds for military retirees stolen

THE pension system of the entire Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is riddled with anomalies. As a result, many retired military personnel do not receive their pensions. Others suffer long delays before receiving their pensions. As of now, the government owes 112,000 retired military personnel ₱16 billion. Last week, 9,700 retired AFP elements complained about the delay of their pensions since May.

The fund shortage has worsened since 2006 when the Armed Forces of the Philippines Retirement and Separation Benefits System (AFP-RSBS) was closed due to rampant anomalies. The AFP-RSBS invested the pension funds in real estate projects and lending schemes that didn't prosper and eventually went bankrupt. There are also beneficiaries on the list who have long been dead but whose pensions have been ending up in the pockets of corrupt officials.

Before the RSBS' closure, up to ₱250 million had already been stolen by its corrupt officials by 2000 with not a single rotten official charged.

The AFP has known since October 2011 that there will be a crisis in the military pension system that will affect the benefits received by retirees. This was expected to happen in 2016, but the crisis is already being acutely felt now.