

Socialism is the pro-poor alternative for the Philippines

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Our times call for drastic changes in the social and political structures of national and international communities. The market system of capitalism and its policy of neo-liberal globalization have miserably failed the world because instead of uplifting the welfare of humankind, they have continuously exploited the productive classes of societies and have caused extensive devastations to the environment. The current global financial and economic crisis, the worst since the Great Depression of 1929, and preceded by three other financial crises, the 1987 Black Monday crash of Wall Street, the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2001 collapse of the dot com industry, have clearly shown that the capitalist system breeds chaos in the economic arena since it is propelled by the speculative greed of monopoly investors in the stock market. The Great Market Crash of 2008 in Wall Street, initiated by speculative capital activity in the US real estate business, have spread like wildfire to other countries in the world as far as Australia because of the electronic connections of modern business. It has consequently led to the closures of thousands of factories, service firms and other corporations, laying off millions of workers, and have bankrupted thousands of banks, ruining the savings of millions of ordinary people. The bail-outs by capitalist governments to save capitalism, which have now reached trillions of US dollars, have only further perpetuated the rule of capital over the lives of people, since these bail-outs mostly go to the pockets of CEOs and other moguls of capitalism, who were the cause of the present world miseries in the first place. And the gall of it all is that it is the lower income classes who will pay for these bail-outs of their exploiters.

The world system of capitalism therefore stands condemned before humankind because of its irrationality and culture of greed. For while millions of tons of food are stacked in stores, while thousands of unsold lumbers are rotting in warehouses and thousands of vehicles remained unsold, millions of people wonder how they will survive the next day and are rendered homeless. According to UN statistics, almost a billion people now are unemployed, 70 millions of them thrown out of their jobs because of the present crisis. And while the owners of the forces of production have grown richer and richer due to the increased productivity of their workers, the latter cannot buy the products that they themselves have produced due to the control of wages and salaries by their employers. But even among the capitalists themselves, the chaotic battle of one against all using all means, have led to the bankruptcies of weaker capitalists and the greater concentration of the resources of the world in the hands of fewer and fewer monopoly giants.

It is only called for that this present disorder enveloping the world caused by capitalism must finally come to an end to save the fate of humankind. Those who are the first victims of capitalism, the productive classes of the world, factory workers, engineers, scientists, artists under the employ of capitalists, and others, must finally come to their own and understand the logic of their exploitation.

They must organize into people's movements and launch decisive actions to wrest the ownership of the means of production from the hands of the dwindling number of monopoly capitalists and transfer the running of the economies of their countries to the collective efforts of their citizens. Thus, the private ownership of the resources of the world, particularly the means of production, must be dismantled to a social ownership to restore order in the economy and to preserve the environment, which is being destroyed by the activities of capitalism.

Indeed, in these dire moments in the history of our civilizations, radical measures must be boldly taken by all peoples of the world, who have long been hostage to the rapacious drive for profit by capitalism. Working within the limited framework offered by capitalist and capitalist-influenced governments are not enough since they often only lead to dead ends with capitalism still emerging dominant. Reformism is the game of bourgeois governments and which has frequently placed progressive movements in a bind, sometimes corrupting them. The most effective method to finally bring down the moribund and but still resilient capitalist system is to adopt extra-legal means outside the confines offered by governments succored by capitalism. But progressive groups can also utilize methods which are legally allowed by such governments, never forgetting however that by themselves these methods may only serve to give a democratic façade to these governments and continue the rule of capital. Progressive groups must likewise adopt a common program towards the social ownership and utilization of the means of production to advance the welfare of all. Since every social movements must have a vanguard group to lead them in the struggle against oppressive dominant classes, the productive classes or the working class, wielding the theory of socialism and paralyzing effectively the workings of capitalism from within through general strikes and other means, logically must be that vanguard class in the transition towards a new social order.

In the Philippines, greater miseries have descended upon its people because of the ongoing global economic crisis. Since the Philippines is a dependent economy on foreign capital and employment, the crisis of capitalism has rendered its society a grievous blow as it has religiously adhered to neo-liberal globalization or the policy of open economy espoused by the Western nations, led by US monopoly capitalism. Hundreds of thousands of workers have been laid off in the Philippines since 2008 because of the closures of export-oriented factories and the reduction of workforce due to cost-savings. Thousands more overseas workers are forced to go back home after they have lost their jobs, facing an uncertain future in their country. The ranks of the poor are constantly swelling because of the lack of job opportunities in the foreign-dominated economy and the utter neglect of the government for the upliftment of social services. The bail-out or stimulus package promised by the Arroyo government will surely just line the pockets of top executives and go down the drain of bureaucratic corruption.

As academics in the University of the Philippines, we believe it is our bounded duty to respond with our expertise to the grave problems confronting our people today. We are presenting herewith urgent alternative programs to drastically re-structure the Philippine society in face of the present crisis besetting our society. We have laid out alternative measures to be undertaken in the following vital areas of the nation: land reform, national industrialization, fiscal and monetary policies, social services, livelihood and rights of the people, and trade and foreign relations.

In the transformation of the semi-feudal and semi-colonial Philippine society, the following are offered as an alternative program to that of the present dispensation:

A. The launching of a genuine land reform program which will give free lands to poor peasants, specifically tenants in the agricultural sector - The Philippines is a basically agricultural country with 70% of its population living in the rural areas and 45% of its workforce engaged in agricultural work. That is why the implementation of an effective land reform program will answer this basic condition of Philippine society. As of 1991, the last survey on Philippine

Agriculture by the NSO, 5.44% of landowners own 44 % of total agricultural lands. This problem of land monopolization, which characterized the semi-feudal structure of the Philippine countryside, as is also seen in the persistent existence of tenancy in 35% of all Philippine farms and 26% of its total farm area, must finally be dismantled. Past land reforms in the Philippines, particularly the Comprehensive Land Reform Program(CARP) have treated such programs as commercial transactions between the tenant and his landlord with the former buying his piece of land at a price set by the latter. Thus, the social egalitarian aspect of land reform has been sacrificed to the interests of landowners, including the comprador bourgeoisie, who have strong influence in the Philippine Congress. That is why all land reform programs in the country have failed to restructure Philippine agriculture towards equity in sharing the resources of the land and maintained its backwardness. And the inequitable distribution of the wealth of the land and the backwardness of the Philippine rural sector have become a main cause of the extensive poverty of the Pilipino people with 80% of them now living below the poverty line. In an alternative and genuine land reform program, there should be then:

1. There shall be direct expropriation of lands without compensation of landlords who have been proven to have been engaged in landgrabbing and proven guilty of serious crimes such as extrajudicial executions, maintaining private armies, etc. particularly in connection with agrarian disputes. The policy of expropriation shall also be applied to land used by capitalist farms.
2. Abandoned agricultural lands and other lands not put into productive use shall also be subject to expropriation without compensation. Such expropriation shall be undertaken in democratic consultation with the peasants and their associations in the area.
3. The policy of expropriation with compensation shall apply to landlords who have a proven record of actively supporting progressive people's movements. The state in close democratic consultation with peasant associations shall determine the specific applicability, amount and methods of compensation, according to the general guideline in a new agrarian reform to be made into law.
4. Owner-peasants of middle-middle status may be given some share of the land being distributed free, subject to land availability, in order to raise their level of livelihood, provided, they themselves shall till the land.
5. Work animals, farm implements and other property expropriated from the landlords shall be distributed free based on the principle of equity or turned over to peasant associations for administration and common use.
6. Homes, industrial and commercial enterprises, artisans' shops, schools, religious houses, plazas, public playgrounds and the like shall be allotted their necessary land sites, which shall exclusively be used for such purposes.
7. Landlords may be allotted part of their land to the same extent and quality given to the poor peasants and the lower-middle peasants, provided that they shall till the land themselves.
8. Expropriated haciendas and agricultural corporations cultivated by wage workers shall be converted into workers cooperatives or collectives upon democratic consultation with the workers tilling the land. However, tenanted haciendas shall be subject to free land distribution to their tenants.
9. Leased lands devoted to ranches and cattle farming shall be expropriated and transformed into workers cooperatives or collectives upon democratic consultation with the peasants and workers on these lands.

10. Non-owner operated privately owned fishing areas, including those in marine and inland water, shall be expropriated and all private leases of the same be immediately terminated. These areas shall revert to the public domain and shall be used mainly as communal fishing grounds. Municipal fishing grounds shall be protected from encroachments by big local and foreign fishing boats.
11. Land used as fishponds, including prawn farms, shall be covered by land reform. Where tenancy relations operate, fishponds shall be distributed for free to the tenants. Where wage relations operate and partitioning will adversely affect productivity, fishponds shall be transformed into publicly-owned farms or into cooperatives or collectives, subject to democratic consultations with the workers therein.
12. The right of national and ethnic minorities to their ancestral domain shall be recognized and their communal property rights shall be guaranteed. The demarcation of their ancestral and communal lands shall be determined through democratic consultation with them and their associations.
13. All distributed lands cannot be sold nor mortgaged but can be inherited by heir/heirs of the tiller-peasant provided that the former would likewise till the land. This policy is to prevent remonopolization of lands.
14. Peasant cooperatives and collectives shall be formed and promoted to consolidate the gains of agrarian reform and raise agricultural and all related production. They shall also be encouraged and assisted by the public sector in establishing and operating tree farms, orchards, fishponds, livestock farms, pasture land, carpentry shops, farm machinery depots, pools of work animal and rural industries that are beyond the work of ownership scale of single households.
15. The cooperatives and collectives shall be run through peasants associations in their respective area localities. Peasants who have been granted free land shall have the choice to either individually work on their lands or be organized into cooperatives or collectives.
16. Owner-peasants who are not beneficiaries of free land redistribution shall be encouraged to form cooperatives through such incentives as technical assistance and credit privileges.
17. A program shall be implemented to attain self-sufficiency in food production through extensive capital investment in the countryside. Agricultural production shall be primarily geared to domestic demand in order to achieve food self-reliance and to supply raw materials for domestic industrial production.
18. Economic or agrarian schemes or policies legitimizing the conversion of prime agricultural lands into so-called industrial estates, urban housing estates and subdivisions, gold courses or for the cultivation of export luxury crops shall be prohibited.
19. The public sector shall ensure food security in grain, protein sources and cooking oil and maintain prices at a level beneficial and encouraging to the peasant producers. Usury and other unduly exploitative practices in the trading of agricultural inputs and produce shall be prohibited.
20. To increase productivity in the agricultural sector, financial assistance in form of subsidies for the purchase or rent of farm machinery and equipment shall be extended to cooperatives and collectives. Low interest or interest-free credit within definite periods of time shall likewise be offered to peasant associations to enable them to expand their production and raise productivity to assure the urban areas of a stable supply of food and other agricultural products. More rural banks shall be established with their primary clientele the agricultural cooperatives and collectives.

21. Fair farm gate prices shall be paid for the peasants' produce. Such prices shall be determined in democratic consultation with peasant associations on the basis of affording the peasants stable and decent standard of living.

The above are just some of the salient provisions of a new agrarian reform program to be formulated by an alternative government. Among other important points to be decided in a new land reform program would be the size of land not to be subjected to expropriation provided that they are productively tilled by their owner and the size of land to be distributed free to peasants. In line with this, an Agrarian Institute whose personnel are to be nominated by peasant associations shall be established. This Agrarian Institute shall be primarily responsible to implement and supervise the agrarian reform program.

B. The launching of a National Industrialization Program in consonance with the Agrarian Reform Program - The Philippines status as a semi-colony of the US is exemplified in its export-oriented and import dependent economy through the dictates of its foreign creditors, led by the US dominated IMF-World Bank. Because of this dependence, the Philippine economy will collapse if its vital lifeline through export-import activities and the infusion of foreign loans were to be cut by its leading foreign mentor, US monopoly capitalism. The ruling classes in the Philippines, the comprador bourgeoisie and feudal landlords, have zealously maintained this semi-colonial status of the country, highly lucrative to them as they partake of the loans obtained from abroad, which are passed on to be paid by the Filipino masses. They are also partners in business, particularly the comprador bourgeoisie, with foreign enterprises and thereby perpetuate the backward status of the Philippines as a source of cheap labor and raw materials which increase the profits of monopoly capitalism. Thus, a genuine national industrialization program must aim to end the semi-colonial structure of Philippine society and to primarily advance the welfare of the masses through a policy of economic self-reliance. Such a genuine national industrialization program must undertake the following:

1. It shall dismantle the dominance of foreign monopoly capitalists and the comprador big-bourgeoisie over the means of production in the economy mainly through expropriation of foreign-monopoly and big comprador assets. It must expropriate and nationalize the business of US, Japanese and other foreign monopoly capitalists in vital and strategic industries. Where necessary, the manner of compensation as well as exceptions to this policy shall be subject to negotiation. Exemptions shall be made only in cases of exceptional record with respect to contributions to the national economy, in terms of technology transfer, worker policy and access to products or markets as defined by a specific plan. However, in no case shall foreign equity exceed 40% in these enterprises.

2. Assets of big compradors and bureaucrat capitalists shall be expropriated. Their cartels and big monopoly commercial operations shall be dismantled. Ill-gotten assets of bureaucrat capitalists shall be subject to immediate confiscation.

3. Public-sector enterprises, variations of joint public-private venture, cooperative and individual entrepreneurship shall all be recognized as legitimate modes of ownership of enterprises. As a primary emphasis, production and distribution shall be oriented towards achieving overall social and economic goals.

4. The public sector shall assume ownership and operation of vital and strategic enterprises, the main sources of raw materials, and the main lines of distribution. The public sector shall be wholly responsible for all utilities(power, water and sanitation, communications-telecommunications and postal services, and mass transport) and social services(housing, health, education, social security). Comprehensive plans shall be drawn up and implemented to improve the provision of public utilities

and services to all the people and to preclude profit-determined allocations.

5. All industrial enterprises and mechanized farms shall have workers councils whose representatives shall sit in the board of directors or trustees and participate in policy making and management. The policy and decision making authority of the workers councils shall cover production, marketing and overall organizational management. Workers participation in running industry shall be further strengthened through encouragement of and incentives for collective ownership and control of enterprises.

6. Where there are unions in an enterprise, the workers shall have the option to organize the workers' council through the union or to directly organize a separate workers council alongside the union.

7. Cooperatives of small and medium-scale manufacturers shall be encouraged and supported.

8. The national bourgeoisie and smaller private owners of the means of production shall be given support for their creativity and efforts. They shall be given the necessary incentives and support in areas where their private initiative will be most productive.

9. Savings for industrial development shall be generated by setting definite limits on the allocation of public funds for the military and police, imported equipment for the use of offices and infrastructure projects that are not directly related to industrial and agricultural development.

10. Foreign investments and loans shall be availed of only in cases of clearly unreplicable advantages in terms of technology transfer or access to capital, products or markets as defined by specific economic plans.

11. Foreign corporations and entities in manufacturing enterprises may be allowed a minority equity share. Safeguards shall be adopted against such devices or schemes as the use of dummies, interlocking directorates and shell corporations.

12. The retail trade industry shall be exclusively in the hands of Filipino nationals. The moves towards "liberalizing" or opening retail trade to aliens shall be reversed and measures taken to stop the pervasive violation and circumvention of this policy of limiting retail trade exclusively to Filipino nationals.

13. All foreign capital shall be subject to strict regulation and supervision with regard to employment practices, access to capital, pricing, profit remittances and capital repatriation. Regulation shall particularly focus on the entry of all forms of foreign speculative capital, on capital repatriation in whatever form (profits, royalties, franchises or through transfer-pricing) and on access to domestic capital and shall have the objective of reversing the continuous drain of capital from the country.

14. There shall be the adoption of a social planning for the purpose of ensuring balanced and well-proportioned economic development with heavy industry as the leading factor, agriculture as the base and light industry as the bridging factor of the economy for immediately producing basic consumer goods for the entire people and producer goods needed by agriculture.

15. All economic plans shall, on the basis of the concrete situation at any given time, specify the phasing of industrial development and shall ensure that priorities are adhered to. Strategic industrial objectives shall be the overriding consideration in the formulation and implementation of such economic plans.

16. Measures to ensure and encourage national industrialization, including but not restricted to tariffs, tax exemptions, foreign exchange controls, credit and investment incentives, quotas or outright import prohibitions shall be adopted and used to encourage production in the import-substitution industries, which are essential to the creation of a domestic industrial base.
17. Importation of necessary capital goods shall be undertaken, especially in the initial stages on industrialization with a view to building the country's capital goods industry and ending import-dependence as soon as possible.
18. Measure shall be taken to reverse the current practice of corporations, particularly foreign, of concentrating industries in a few urban trading centers and without linkages to the rural sector.
19. There shall be high premium on the development of the country's capabilities in science and technology as an essential requirement for rapid and sustained expansion of productive capacity.
20. Measures to promote research and development in the basic and applied sciences shall be adopted. Sustained investment in developing science and technology shall be undertaken together with protective policies in the active effort to develop domestic productive capacity.
21. There shall be a survey conducted of indigenous technologies that are relevant and appropriate, particularly with respect to the domestic processing of agricultural and industrial raw materials with a view of their harnessing, expanded use and upgrading.
22. Measures shall be taken to augment the domestic stock of technological knowledge by selectively tapping personnel and equipment from abroad, by entering into technology-sharing and technology-development agreements with other countries and by actually sending Filipinos overseas to learn technological advances with a view to adapting these to our needs and capacities.
23. The active participation of productive enterprises and mass organizations in science and technology development as users and themselves as sources of innovation shall be promoted.
24. We recognize that the unfettered operation of the "free market" will work against any national economic plan having the welfare of the majority of the Filipinos as its primary concern, and thereby to pursue overall economic and social goals effectively, economic planning must take account of the availability of labor power, land and capital, technology, gestation period, scale economies, forward and backward linkages, environment implications and competing claims on investible resources at an economy-wide level.
25. There shall be undertaken the tapping and directing of the country's human and natural resource potential to benefit the majority of the people as opposed to allowing its appropriation by parasitic foreign and local exploiting classes and the ensuring that domestic patterns of production and consumption are determined according to domestic needs and capacity.
26. There shall be measures for redirecting the economy away from its current agrarian and pre-industrial level of development, taking into consideration the multiple objectives of eliminating poverty, reducing income inequality and rationalizing consumption, investment and growth.
27. There will be economic plans in five-year periods and yearly and timely adjustments. Production target quotas shall be set for all enterprises: individual, cooperative and collective. Administrative decentralization and enterprise flexibility shall be encouraged, among others, through the operations of the market which shall however not preclude overall coordination according to the economic plan.

28. Measures shall be taken to ensure the active and genuine participation of all classes through their mass organizations in the formulation and implementations of national and local social-economic plans.

29. There shall be undertaken vigorous campaigns in all civil agencies, institutions and organizations against all form of graft, corruption and inefficiency, in as much as these grossly undermine the effectivity of the various tools of planning as well as contribute to massive bureaucratic waste.

30. There shall be adopted a comprehensive and balanced national policy for the country's natural resources and their all-round exploration, conservation and development to redress the pattern of neo-colonial exchange of raw materials and manufactures that has resulted in the reckless depletion and intensified extraction of the country's natural resources. Measures shall be instituted to ensure a healthy natural environment giving due regard to the protection and efficient utilization of the country's renewable and non-renewable resource base.

31. Economic development shall be pursued with due regard for the protection and efficient use of the country's renewable and non-renewable resources. Ensuring ecological balance shall be an important component of economic development planning.

The above are some of the important provisions in an alternative national industrialization program and could be fine-tuned in its details in a comprehensive law to restructure the industries of the Philippines.

C. On Monetary and Fiscal Policies - The present financial system of the Philippines which allocates capital primarily to sustain the activities of foreign business in the country, particularly in the export sector, militates against the development of a strong economy that basically serves the welfare of the majority Filipinos. Budget-allocations by the government likewise give priorities to servicing foreign debts, granting graft-ridden contracts to foreign companies and strengthening the military in order to prop up the rule of the few elites in our country. To counter these conditions, the following program on monetary and fiscal policies is presented :

1. The financial system, including banks, insurance, investment houses and bond companies shall be owned and controlled by the public sector and Filipino nationals.

2. The expropriation of foreign equity in financial institutions with or without compensation shall be undertaken. The manner of compensation as well as any exception to this policy shall be subject to negotiation based on national interest.

3. The Central Bank and all its other financial institutions shall be reorganized and redirected to support and assist the policy and program of national industrialization and land reform. They shall give priority to the industrial projects of the public sector and Filipino entrepreneurs. The Land Bank and rural banks shall likewise be reorganized and redirected to support and assist genuine agrarian reform, cooperatives, collectives, peasant associations and agricultural production in general.

4. In every financial institution, there shall be a workers' council whose representatives shall sit in the board of directors or trustees and shall participate in policy making and management in order to ensure the realization of the policy and program of national industrialization and agrarian reform. The scope of their participation in policy making shall cover investment decisions, debt management and other monetary policies.

5. Public finance, including taxation, credit policy and fiscal spending, shall be directed towards maximizing funds for the realization of the strategic plan of economic development, especially

national industrialization and agrarian reform and eliminating bureaucratic, military and other counterproductive expenditures. Credit windows in banks shall be opened for low-interest or interest-free loans for small enterprises and to assist poor families to meet their basic needs.

6. Fiscal policy shall be a function of social planning which shall in turn be oriented towards continually expanding social welfare. Priority in expenditures shall be given to social services, social infrastructure and investment in strategic and vital industries. Public expenditures for infrastructure and the productive sectors of the economy shall be directed towards generating more employment for the people.

7. The budgetary allocation for the military shall be drastically reduced and the saving redirected to allocations for social services, such as education, health, public housing, mass transportation and the like.

8. Taxation shall be progressive. All regressive taxes such as the value-added tax shall be abolished.

9. The law on automatic appropriation of the budget for foreign debt or PD 1177 shall be repealed. All past foreign debts shall be immediately reexamined to determine which are to be cancelled, frozen or renegotiated. All fraudulent and behest loans shall be repudiated and renegotiations of all other onerous loans shall be undertaken. Those who have previously incurred or used these foreign debts and privately benefited from them shall be prosecuted and made criminally and civilly liable.

10. The policy and program of privatization to pay for public debts instigated by the International Monetary Fund shall be reversed.

11. All laws, orders and issuances which are contrary to the above measures such as the Banking Law of 1994 and PD on Offshore Banking shall be repealed.

The above are the immediate measures to be adopted by a government with a goal of funding an effective agrarian reform and nationalization programs for the Philippines and setting first the advancement of the people's welfare in its budget plans. Specific laws and guidelines can be drawn up to bolster these initial measures.

D Social Services, Livelihood and Rights of Citizens - Without leading to the improvement of the quality of lives of its citizens, affording them the opportunities to fully develop their potentials, agrarian reform and national industrialization would be meaningless. For after all, economic development should redound to social development to increase the well-being of individuals. The following measures shall be undertaken towards this goal:

1. Measures shall be adopted to promote full employment and equality of employment opportunities and shall guarantee the right of workers to work, organize themselves into unions, federations and confederations, engage in collective bargaining, to strike and engage in other concerted activities in advancing their rights and interests.

2. Measures shall be adopted to guarantee workers security of tenure, humane conditions of work and a decent living wage indexed to the rising cost of living as well as to guarantee the right to sufficient relief or unemployment allowance in case of disemployment and assistance in returning to work.

3. Government workers, including the military and police, shall be encouraged to form unions.

4. Measures shall be adopted to protect the rights and welfare of Filipino overseas workers but at the same time steps shall be taken to reverse the problem of migration and the current labor-export

policy. A viable program for the repatriation of Filipino overseas workers and for their participation in nation-building shall be effected.

5. Women shall enjoy equal opportunities as men in work, shall receive equal pay for equal work and shall enjoy guarantees against discrimination and harassment. Social services to lighten housework shall be provided such as low-cost meals, cheap public laundry services and affordable day-care center and nurseries. Working women shall be entitled to maternity leave with pay and guaranteed the support of their partners who shall also be entitled to paternity leave with pay. Single parents and female household heads shall be assured benefits, including children's education and health care.

6. Positive measures shall be undertaken to redress the discrimination suffered by gays and lesbians and such other discriminated groups.

7. Positive measures shall likewise be undertaken in favor of national and ethnic minorities to redress the long history of their discrimination and neglect and to respect their right to self-determination or autonomy.

8. An economic research office to register all the unemployed and underemployed in the labor force shall be established with the objective of guiding the economic planning agency in adopting measures to generate employment and expand the infrastructure for social services.

9. Urban renewal and public housing shall be undertaken to service the housing needs of the working people and the urban poor. No relocation of the urban poor shall be carried out without prior democratic consultation with them and without provision for adequate assistance in transferring, public housing and livelihood in the area of resettlement. Otherwise, urban poor settlers shall temporarily be allowed to remain in the land that they occupy until such provisions can be met.

10. A public health and medical care system that shall provide a universal and free services and medicines for all shall be established. It shall pay attention to preventive medicine, better nutrition and family planning and shall give priority to delivering health care and medicine to the impoverished sick, aged, disabled, women and children. The policy of privatization of hospitals and health services, which discriminates against the low-income sectors, shall be immediately reversed.

11. Education shall be a primary responsibility of the state and shall be made accessible to all Filipinos. Free education shall be ensured at the primary and secondary level while affordable and eventually free education shall be provided at the tertiary level. Private educational institutions shall be allowed provided these are administered according to the program of public education and shall be eventually assimilated into the public education sector. The privatization of state colleges and universities shall be immediately reversed. A national, scientific and democratic education shall be established to develop among students a sense of national self-confidence and cultural identity, critical thinking and social responsibility.

12. The right of children to proper care and education shall be protected and upheld. A program of comprehensive childcare to be fully or partially subsidized, whichever is possible, shall be established. The present situation where thousands of children become sick or die or become street children must be immediately addressed with extensive social welfare programs.

13. Proper care for the aged shall be instituted and pension benefits for all retirees increased, calibrated to the rate of inflation and the cost of living. The aged shall be provided the necessary financial and social support to enable them to live with dignity. Families with aged members to care

shall be allocated subsidies. Old-age homes shall also be established and subsidized. Retirees shall be assured of fulfilling lives and given opportunities to continue to be active and productive.

14. Social services and productive training for the handicapped shall be established and expanded and opportunities created for them to be productive and to find fulfillment along various endeavors where their special potentials and abilities may be optimized.

These are just some of the measures to be immediately addressed in an alternative program to promote the welfare of the Filipino people. Further deepening of these measures in appropriate laws and guidelines can be undertaken.

E. Foreign Economic and Trade Relations - The Philippines having an export-oriented and import dependent economy is among the first, if not the first, to suffer a steep economic decline when business in the developed countries, specifically in the US, undergo a crisis as it is experiencing now. The downturn in the Philippine economy is more intense since it primarily subsists on foreign loans and investments and is committed to abide by so many onerous conditionality imposed by its creditors, primarily the IMF-World Bank, in order to be given new loans. Worse, the Philippines has to follow the dictates of the sister organization of the IMF-WB, the World Trade Organization, in its trade policies even if these are contrary to the interests of local business. The heavy subservience of the Philippines to the ways of the capitalist countries, particularly US monopoly capitalism, constitutes her semi-colonial status. To wrest the country from this oppressive situation, the following measures must be taken:

1. There shall be the halting of the further denationalization of the economy through the policies of deregulation and liberalization of trade and investments which have been dictated by dominant capitalist countries and by their multilateral agencies like the IMF, WB and the WTO.

2. The export-oriented program as promoted by the IMF-WB-WTO shall be reversed. Industrialization shall not be tied to exports and the attraction of foreign investors to engage in export activities. Export-processing zones and industrial enclaves which perpetuate the neo-colonial character of the economy shall be closed or converted for use in self-reliant production of goods to meet domestic needs.

3. A policy of protection of enterprises owned and controlled by Filipino nationals, which entails the discontinuation of the liberalization program, shall be adopted and pursued. The policy of import dependency that has led to the stagnation of Philippine technology and the dumping of surplus goods and obsolete technology into the country, particularly from the US and Japan, shall be repudiated.

4. The highest priority shall be given to the importation of industrial equipment and technology to advance the program of national industrialization. Trade and investment policies that have reduced the country to a mere exporter of raw materials, low value-added manufactures and human resources shall be terminated.

5. A trade policy that is geared to pushing the Philippines along the path of industrialization shall be adopted. This means a policy of limiting imports to the following: (a) technology which the economy is incapable of creating at present and which can be improved later on by Filipino scientists and engineers; and (b) other essential items which cannot be sufficiently produced domestically for the meantime.

6. Adequate protection against dumping by foreign interests as well as incentives shall be provided to Filipino-owned industrial enterprises and agricultural producers.

7. The policy promoting economic independence and industrial development by engaging in close economic relations and cooperation with neighboring countries in East Asia and other countries throughout the world and by taking advantage of the increasing competition among the major industrial capitalist countries shall be adopted.

8. Membership in international economic institutions such as the WTO, IMF-WB and APEC which aim to protect the economic interests of the advanced capitalist countries shall be withdrawn.

9. A policy to diversify trade relations to break the country's trade dependence on the United States and Japan and to enable it to effectively bargain for the best terms in the international market shall be adopted.

10. The activities of foreign trading companies allowed to operate in the Philippines, particularly with regard to their policies towards workers, shall be closely regulated.

We accept that the adoption and implementation of the foregoing alternative programs in the vital areas as discussed will be fraught with great difficulties. We accept that greater emphasis be placed on extra-legal means in coordination with legal means to realize a political system that will abide by the radical measures as advocated in this manifesto. In this respect, we envision a political system in which the majority of the Filipino people, the workers, peasants, professionals, the youth, urban poor, ordinary church people, and others have been empowered through their mass organizations which would then be dominant in the running of the country. We envision a social system where the present ruling elites in the nation, the landlord and comprador classes, together with their foreign patrons, would have been shorn off their powers to dictate the destiny of our people. We aspire for a new constitution that will truly reflect the national interest and safeguard and advance the rights and welfare of the Filipino people, specially the underprivileged and poor.

We declare ourselves as one with the struggles of all peoples of the world, who have long been oppressed by capitalists and their cohorts, to build a more humane social order where the dignity of all individuals shall be upheld. We believe that by the cooperative endeavors of all, we can surpass this current global turmoil wrought by the irrationality and greed of capitalism. With all right-thinking people, we will seek to realize a society where humans shall cease to be treated as commodities to be sold and bought by capital but whose fulfillment shall be advanced in order for them to live meaningful lives..

We call therefore on all Filipinos to disseminate this manifesto and involve themselves in activities to realize its objectives.

Long live the Filipino masses!

P.S.

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