



PETITION FILED BEFORE NCR WAGE BOARD

FFW, LSM push for 77-peso daily across-the-board wage increase

The Federation of Free Workers (FFW) along with other labor organizations comprising the Labor Solidarity Movement (LSM) have filed before the Regional Tripartite Wage and Productivity Board (RTWPB) of the National Capital Region a joint petition calling for a daily across-the-board wage increase of P77 in Metro Manila.

The considerable increases in prices and corresponding reduction in workers' purchasing power prompted the petitioners to ask for a salary hike.

Filing the petition are labor centers Labor Advisory Consultative Council (LACC), of which FFW is a member, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) and Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL).

Since the last legislated minimum wage was set at P89 nationwide in 1989 through RA 6727, wage increases have paled in comparison to the general increase in prices. Broken down, the amount of P77 represents P38 necessitated by escalating prices and another P39 from workers' share of the growth in the region. (*see computation at the right*)

The joint petition was filed on 26 July 2001 with Mr. Ramon Jabar

of FFW-LACC, Mr. Daniel Edralin of APL and Mr. Democrito Mendoza of TUCP as signatories.

Living wage

“This (petition for a 77-peso hike) is considerably low compared to the 125-peso legislated wage increase being espoused by the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU),” said FFW President Ramon Jabar. He explained that the increase being proposed by FFW and LSM is not even enough to bring up wages to the level of “living wages” mandated by the Constitution.

The petitioners believe the economy will suffer should they ask for the full adjustment for living wages at this time. “Whether employers are amenable (to the 77-peso proposal) remains to be seen,” he continued.



Why 77 pesos

From January 1991—when the minimum wage was pegged at **P118**—to the end of 2001, according to FFW-LSM the Consumer Price Index (CPI) would have increased **2.44** times. Thus, multiplying the minimum wage rate of January 1991 to the number of times the CPI shall have increased by the end of 2001, will yield:

P118 (minimum wage rate in 1991)
X 2.44 (CPI increase from 1991-2001)
P288

Therefore, to keep up with the prices, workers need P38 more since the present minimum wage rate is P250:

P288 (amt needed to keep up with prices)
- 250 (current minimum wage)
P 38 (increase necessitated by escalating prices)

Workers also need to improve their standard of living. Since they have done their share in economic development, they rightfully deserve a piece of the regional growth, which averaged **3.3** per cent annually from **P220,972** in 1991 to **P279,045**

Emergency Cost of Living

Allowance, non-wage proposals

Deliberations of the Regional Wage Boards as in the past, have taken a long time. Anticipating this, FFW has proposed that a 50-peso Emergency Cost of Living Allowance (ECOLA) be granted by employers while awaiting the RTWPB's wage order. Workers, in dire need of meeting the basic needs of their families will be able to do so, even if only partially, with the help of the ECOLA. The President echoed this sentiment in her State of the Nation Address.

To entice employers to accede to it, workers' groups explained that it may eventually be credited to any increase in wages that would be ordered by the RTWPBs or enacted by

are not adverse to the concept of legislated wage adjustments but we are only emphasizing the urgency of any grant, whether it is from the Regional Wage Boards or from Congress."

It will take long before any legislation on an increase in wages could be passed by both houses of Congress. We see that a legislated wage increase nationwide, no matter what amount it will be, will only come in 2002, the earliest.

"We need something for the workers to stand on for this year," they affirmed.

Employers Confederation of the Philippines Director-General Vicente Leogardo, Jr. adamantly objects to a 125-peso legislated wage increase. "It will wipe out the export

Other regions file their petitions

Petitions for across-the-board wage increases have also been filed by FFW and LSM in other regions. These include Region 7 in Cebu, in Iloilo and Panay Island; Region 4; Region 6; Region 3 and Region 2.

Specific rates of pay hikes being pushed for vary—with the highest pegged at P90 across-the-board in Region 6, and the lowest at around P60 in Region 2.

Inefficient Wage Boards

The Wage Rationalization Act (RA 6727), enacted into law by Congress in June 1989 created and mandated RTWPBs to determine and fix minimum wages and adjust salary rates in all regions. Workers have a consensus that their performance over the past 12 years is wanting.

"In the medium term and the long term, we are for a total review of the wage determination system in the Philippines," narrates Mr. Oliveros. "Along that line, we are amenable to the position that regional wage boards have to be abolished to put in place an industry bargaining mechanism, an enterprise-based mechanism already in effect, and a national minimum wage setting," he clarifies.

The same view is expressed by Mr. Jabar. "We are for its abolition!" He goes on to say that the most effective way of determining the minimum wage is through collective bargaining. "Workers must organize into unions, where they can bargain for wages and better terms of employment," he said.

Composing the Regional Wage Boards are the Regional Director of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) as Chairman; Regional Directors of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and Department of Trade Industry as Vice Chairs; and two members each from the labor and employers sectors, who are Presidential appointees.

in 1999. Based on the minimum wage of 1991 once more, we compute the following:

P118 (*minimum wage rate in 1991*)

X (0.033 x 10) (*annual regional growth rate*)

P 39 (*increase due to region's economic development*)

Adding the needed wage increment to restore the purchasing power of workers and give them a share of the region's real economic development, we have:

P38 (*increase necessitated by escalating prices*)

+ **39** (*increase due to region's economic development*)

P77 (*required daily across-the-board wage increase*)

Congress by means of a legislated wage increase, in the future.

Simultaneously, the FFW also proposes non-wage benefits. FFW leader and Development Bank of the Philippines Director Floro Oliveros says that these include "additional tax exemptions; improved benefits derived from the Social Security System, Government Service Insurance System and Home Development Mutual Fund, including socialized housing; and a moratorium on increases in the costs of basic utilities, fares and basic services."

On a legislated wage increase

Noting FFW's apparent silence on a legislated wage increase, leaders of the FFW qualified that "we

sector since additional labor costs to existing forward contracts will cause severe financial losses and closures," he claimed, before a House Committee on Labor and Employment meeting. He also warned of double-digit inflation alleging that labor's computations for wage increases were not productivity based.

There are actually four wage related bills pending at the House of Representatives, most prominent of which is House Bill 2605 legislating a daily across-the-board wage increase of P125 nationwide filed by Bayan Muna Party List Representatives Hon. Crispin Beltran, KMU leader, Hon. Liza Maza and Hon. Satur Ocampo.

Wage related Bills pending at the House

While FFW and LSM have filed several petitions for an across-the-board wage increase with the different Regional Wage Boards throughout the country, these groups are not adverse to the idea of obtaining the desired increase in workers' pay through legislation. Below is a list of pending bills at the House of Representatives being discussed at the committee level, seeking to increase workers daily take through wage and non-wage benefits and creating an alternative wage determination system.

HB 1377 – “An Act Providing for a Living Wage to Employees and Workers in the Public and Private Sectors, Establishing the Mechanism and Proper Standards Therefor, Repealing Republic Act Numbered 6727, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for other Purposes” by Hon. Krisel Lagman-Luistro

Salient Features:

- Granting of a **living wage** equivalent to the **cost of living** for a **family of six** pegged at P500.00 a day for full-time employees and workers in the public and private agricultural and non-agricultural sectors;
- Price regulation by the state and exemption for those receiving less than the living wage from paying withholding and value-added taxes and contributions to the Government Service Insurance System and Social Security System;
- Creation of a Living Wage Commission, attached to the Department of Labor and Employment, that shall form policies and coordinate programs relating to living wages, income and productivity;
- Imposing fines of P20,000 to P100,000 and/ or imprisonment of six months to one year for violators.

HB 2370 – “An Act Institutionalizing a Mechanism for the Implementation of the Constitutional Rights of Workers to a Living Wage, Establishing the National Living Wage Commission, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for other Purposes” by Hon. Roseller L. Barinaga

Salient Features:

- Entitling workers in the public and private sectors to a **family living**

wage equivalent to the **cost of living** of an **average Filipino family**, as determined by the National Statistics Office and the Commission on Population;

- Tasking the National Economic Development Authority and the Department of Finance to determine the **family living wage** using the classification standard of cities/ municipalities;
- Exempting regular public and private sector wage earners from paying annual withholding income tax;
- Implementing a productivity and incentives performance program that shall grant businesses special deductions from gross income equivalent to ten per cent of the total productivity bonuses given to employees apart from the provisions of the National Internal Revenue Code;
- Abolition of the Regional Wage Boards, and its place create the National Living Wage Commission, attached to the Department of Labor and Employment, that shall form policies and guidelines on family living wages, incomes and productivity improvement;
- Imposing fines of P50,000 to P100,000 and/ or imprisonment of six months to one year for violators.

HB 2605 – “An Act Providing for a P125 Daily Across-the-Board Increase in the Wage and Salary Rates of Employees and Workers in the Private Sector and for other Purposes” by Hon. Crispin Beltran, Hon. Liza Maza and Hon. Satur

Ocampo

Salient Features:

- Granting of a P125 daily across-the-board wage increase to all employees in the private, agricultural and non-agricultural sectors;
- Tasking the Department of Labor and Employment to monitor compliance of the wage increase by companies/ businesses;
- Imposing fines of P25,000 to P100,000 and/ or imprisonment of two to four years for violators, and their payment of an amount equivalent to double the unpaid benefits owed to employees.

HB 2623 – “An Act Granting P125 Daily Across-the-Board in Wages of Filipino Workers Nationwide” by Hon. Rolex Suplicio, Hon. Augusto Syjuco, Hon. Constantino Jaraula and Hon. Carlos Padilla

Sole Feature:

- Granting of a P125 daily across-the-board wage increase to all Filipino workers in view of the rising costs of living in the country.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Department of Labor and Employment
National Wages and Productivity Commission
Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board
National Capital Region
Manila

JOINT PETITION FOR WAGE INCREASE OF P77 DAILY
AT THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

In Re:
Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP)
Labor Advisory Consultative Council (LACC)
Alliance of Progressive Labor (ALP)
Collectively known as the Labor Solidarity Movement (LSM)

JOINT PETITION

Petitioners Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), Labor Advisory Consultative Council (LACC) and the Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL), collectively known as the Labor Solidarity Movement (LSM), by all the undersigned, to this Honorable Commission, respectfully request that you grant the petitioners the following:

Petitioners are duly registered labor organizations and federations whose different locals are in all types and sorts of occupations in the Archipelago of the Philippine Islands.

Editorial

***Increase wages
to humane
&
decent levels
now,
or bear
the wrath
of the poor
once again***

Workers could barely make ends meet as prices of basic commodities continue to skyrocket. And yet government, through the institutions tasked to effect the necessary adjustments in workers' wages to augment the family income, are sitting in their laurels or working at a snail's pace at best.

The Regional Tripartite Wage and Productivity Board (RTWPB) in the National Capital Region is a case in point. The Wage Rationalization Act (RA 6727) mandates RTWPBs to effect wage increases. Despite several petitions for pay hikes already filed before it, including the 77-peso across-the-board wage increase proposed by the FFW and Labor Solidarity Movement (LSM), it has not gone beyond meager consultations.

To this date, official deliberation processes on the petition have yet to commence. Mere bureaucratic consultations being conducted are further delaying the hearings on the petitions.

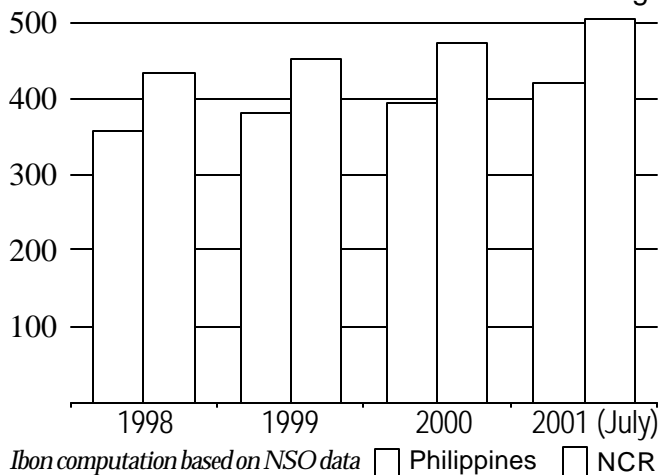
The NCR wage board is following last year's lead when it took four months to deliberate on the P26.50 increase in minimum wages. The longer it takes for the formal hearings to start, the longer workers would have to endure before they could bolster their capacity to purchase basic necessities and commodities and avail of essential services.

What could be hindering the RTWPB from acting immediately is its wrong notion that it could not grant an increase at this point, or until one year has lapsed since its last wage order. They should be told that the 'required' one-year gap is but a policy guideline issued by the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC), which has no bearing in law.

The wage board should at least show compassion and sensitivity to the plight of wage earners and consider them more important than a few bureaucratic impediments. No less than the President of the Republic and the Secretary of Labor, not to mention a handful of legislators have expressed the need to raise wages.

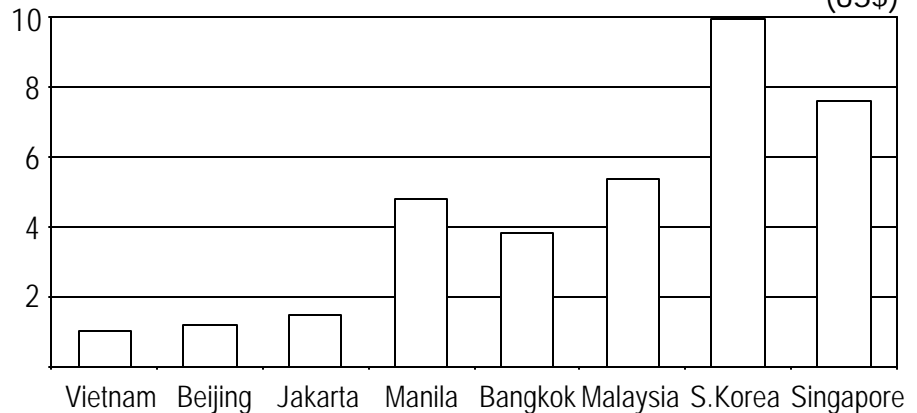
Meanwhile, already on top of the agenda of several hearings by the Committee on Labor and Employment are discussions on four bills that seek to, among others, legislate an across-the-board wage increase of 125 pesos nationwide; institutionalize a family living wage; provide tax relief for underpaid workers and exempt them from giving contributions to the Government Service Insurance System and the Social Security System; and, establish a National Living Wage Commission abolishing Regional Wage Boards.

Daily Cost of Living for a Family of Six (PHP)



Without waiting for the conclusions of these hearings, this early, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has shot down the proposed across-the-board nationwide pay hike, noting that the RTWPB is still the venue for such increments. She is supportive, though of a wage increase based on a specific industry. The House leadership is also opposed to a legislated increase.

Comparativeminimum wages in selected Asian countries (US\$)



Respective countries' website, National Wages and Productivity Commission

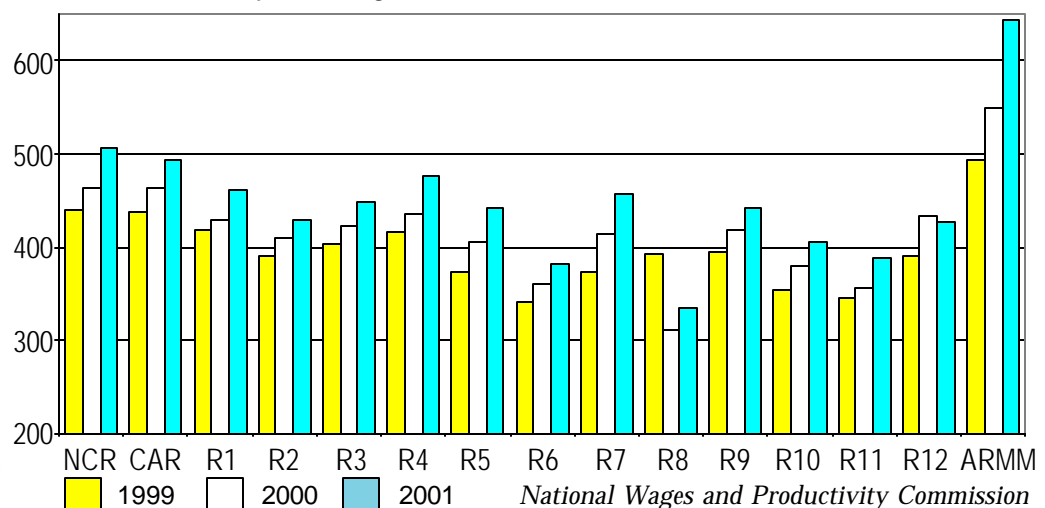
Workers need an immediate relief but there seems to be no help on the horizon. By the estimates of FFW leaders the earliest a legislated wage increase could take effect is next year. Coupled with the delay in the wage boards' processes, workers are being forced to tighten their belts even more at a time when the country is still recovering from the impact of the 1997 turmoil and is contending with political crises.

That is why the wisdom of the President of the Republic in asking employers to grant an emergency cost of living allowance for workers nationwide, articulating it even during her first State of the Nation Address, is laudable. However, unlike a wage order or a new law, which employers have to submit to, the President's mere request could easily be set aside by firm owners.

Workers urgently need something to stand on right now, be it a wage order, a new legislation, an executive order, a new policy or an emergency allowance, as long as it would be granted very soon.

It's about time government realizes there are more important things it should be concerned with other than engaging in headline-hogging political squabbles, like ensuring workers are able to put food on their table and are able to provide their families' basic needs.

Estimated Family Living Wage per day (PHP) 1999, 2000 and 2001 (July)



Should it fail to recognize it or fail to act swiftly and neglect the workers' plea for humane and decent wages, poor people will vent their ire on government institutions that let them down, triggering a social upheaval that has the potential of being far more damaging than the May 1 siege of Malacañang.

A scary thought indeed...

National Wages and Productivity Commission

From labor activist...



I SWEAR.
DBP CEO
and President Remedios
Macalincag administers the
oath-of-office of Dir. Floro
Oliveros

to bank exec

“I have to work hard to learn the basics of banking and finance so that I can well represent the interest and welfare of the Filipino People’s bank. This is a people’s bank,” he asserts.

Ka Roy believes that the interests of the citizens, the real owners of the bank, should be promoted by ensuring the viability, profitability as well as where to secure the funds that have been built through the years since its formation.

DBP appointment

“When we were campaigning for the ouster of Erap, it never hit my mind and those of the leaders in civil society groups... that the campaign to push for good governance will require our participation directly,” admits Ka Roy.

“President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was enjoining our participation directly in handling and administering government,” he explains.

The President relayed that she needed capable individuals in bodies, financial institutions and government-owned and controlled corporations to safeguard the people’s interests.

“When the appointment to the DBP was offered to me, I was really surprised because I was not looking at this nomination,” remarked Ka Roy.

Need to relinquish his posts

Ka Roy was assured and convinced that

being Board Director at the DBP would not make him relinquish his responsibilities in the labor sector and civil society. Or so he thought!

When he realized that he had great responsibilities at the DBP, one by one, he relinquished his positions at the FFW. He gave up being Executive Director of the Philippine Social Institute (PSI) and planned to run for reelection as NVP during the 21st National Convention of the Federation. He had to give that up as well.

“The decision of Roy Oliveros not to run for NVP of the FFW is a sacrifice on his part,” analyzes FFW President Ramon J. Jabar.

“I would like to state very proudly that during the period he was Vice President, he helped the FFW a lot, not only in terms of collective bargaining but representation in other bodies, including participation of the FFW in People Power 2,” he discloses.

“The Director’s position in the Bank, if one is serious about this responsibility is a full time position,” Ka Roy emphasizes.

Dir. Floro O. Oliveros took his oath-of-office on 16 March 2001.

Specific tasks

Because of his background in the labor movement Ka Roy was appointed member of the Bank’s Compensations Committee, which takes care of all the labor and compensation issues.

He speaks when labor issues are raised in

Picture former FFW National Vice President (NVP) Floro Oliveros during the height of political unrest leading to the ouster of ex-President Joseph Estrada. The image that comes to mind is a devoted labor activist clad in a comfortable shirt, worn jeans and running shoes. His voice is almost hoarse from a lot of speaking engagements and protest actions discussing the evils of the Erap Presidency.

Now, think of him as a bank executive—reserved, formal, wearing designer suits, expensive ties and elegant shoes, speaking clearly and calmly during the board meetings of the Development Bank of the Philippines...

See any difference? No matter how we put it, he’s still the devoted labor activist, only this time he is treading new waters in the banking industry, trying hard to represent the ordinary Filipino as Director of the Board of the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), which according to him is the Filipino people’s bank.

private companies’ loan applications and restructuring of loans. “I think of how best the workers’ interests in these companies would be protected,” he divulges. He also sits in the Trust Committee.

He will soon assume the Chairmanship of the Provident Fund for his extensive experience in Mutual Funds owing to stints at the Employees Compensation Commission (ECC) and Home Development Mutual Fund (HDMF).

Career Roadmap

Ka Roy is a career trade union organizer and leader of the Federation. “This would be my 26th year in the labor movement,” he reveals. Fr. Archie Intengan, S.J., who was working with the Young Free Workers (YFW) in 1976, recruited him directly from college.

A former seminarian, the young idealistic Roy was assigned Media Coordinator at first; then a Research and Information Coordinator; Officer-in-Charge of the Research and Information Center; and eventually a Technical Assistant to the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionists (BATU) President and FFW President Emeritus Juan C. Tan.

Soon, he was assigned to the newly created BATU Research and Documentation Center as Policy Researcher until he became negotiator and educator of the Federation’s Operations Department.

Thereafter, he served as FFW Adminis-

trator for about ten years. Towards the end of that term, he was appointed Executive Director of the reorganized PSI, a position he held until this year.

He was elected FFW NVP in 1998, serving one term.

As labor representative

Ka Roy recalls that his first appointment as representative of labor in a tripartite body was in the early 90s with the ECC, where he served as Commissioner for about four years. His next post was as Trustee of the HDMF for two terms (four years).

He represented labor in other bodies like the Tripartite Industrial Peace Council, the Garments Textile Industry Board and the Banking Tripartite Council among others.

“Simultaneously, in my personal capacity, I worked with civil society groups and in several bodies working on various issues such as the environment, good governance and transparency,” Ka Roy relates. He’s been joining anti-graft and corruption coalitions while advocating good governance for more than 20 years.

Things to bear in mind as labor rep

“Know whom you are representing,” is the best piece of advice Ka Roy could give to trade unionists tasked to sit in tripartite or multi-sectoral bodies.

Ka Roy thinks that first and foremost, one should know he/ she is representing labor in general and private sector workers in particular. “Whenever I sit in tripartite bodies I should be sure that the interests, positions and desires of workers will always be in my mind,” notes the Quezon native.

“A lot of preparation and a lot of study should be made in order to effectively represent them in these bodies,” demands Ka Roy of labor leaders in order to discuss issues intelligently and rationally with other sectoral representatives like employers and government.

Ka Roy also urges that one be proactive and forward-looking, able to study the various options available and able to propose programs, policies and systems.

“Presence is also a must,” he affirms. “Always be there in venues of discussion and fora particularly in board meetings and dialogues with government and other sectors,” he reminds leaders.

Ouster of Erap

Ka Roy perhaps cemented his stature as a prominent labor leader during the historical events leading to People Power 2.

He actively represented the FFW and Labor Solidarity Movement (LSM) in Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino 2 (Kompil 2) in the campaign to oust Erap. The activist Roy is a member of the Steering Committee of Kompil 2.

He was part of the transition committee of President GMA. too. “While we were working on the streets we were also working on the table putting on the agenda of government of the president,” he relates.

Roy’s emergence

Ka Roy became the visible leader and representative of both FFW and LSM, gaining prominence as he was tasked to articulate the labor sector’s positions and view in public, in front of large audiences and television cameras.

His old friend, Utol Rey narrates how everyone in their hometown of Quezon, Quezon would eagerly await the next TV appearance of Uloy, Ka Roy’s nickname back home. Utol Rey is Area Coordinator of the FFW-PSI’s Labor Initiatives Toward the Elimination of Child Labor Program (LITECHILD) in the province.

‘Whenever I sit in tripartite bodies I should be sure that the interests, positions and desires of workers will always be in my mind,’

*-- Ka Roy Oliveros
DBP Director , FFW Leader*

His newfound “fame” enabled him at the time to rub elbows a couple of times with renowned political personalities including then Vice President GMA, Executive Secretary Bert Romulo, Senators Tito Guingona and Frank Drilon, Department of the Interior and Local Government Secretary Joey Lina and Presidential Management Staff Chief Vikki Garchitorena, to name a few.

Most of these figures, like Ka Roy were mainstays of Kompil 1, one of the movers of the first People Power, which could explain the recognition he gets. He was also a stalwart of the Bansang Nagkaisa ng Diwa’t Layunin (BANDILA).

Perpetual advocacy work

Ka Roy’s work schedule during the Impeachment Trial was very hectic as it involved not only manning the vigil at the Senate grounds, but also providing manpower and

support to mass actions being done almost everyday.

“We also organized other mass actions in cities like Cagayan De Oro, Davao, Cebu and cities in Luzon so that (the movement) will have a national component,” recounts Ka Roy. Consequently, a council of leaders from various regions evolved, composing Kompil 2’s real backbone.

Secretary of Labor, ‘almost’

“My name cropped up as a candidate for the Secretary of Labor and Employment,” says Ka Roy, who was endorsed by civil society groups. He could not refuse the nomination but hoped not be appointed so as not to leave the sector and responsibilities with the FFW.

Eventually, the ‘acceptable’ and less ‘controversial’ Ms. Patricia Sto. Tomas got the nod, though she was the Chairperson of the Screening Committee, whose members agreed not to be nominated for any position.

Other positions within DOLE like Undersecretary was offered to Ka Roy but turned them down. “I would want the new Secretary of Labor to name her own undersecretary, with whom she can work well,” he declared. The position POEA Administrator was also offered him.

Workers’ Rep by profession

Throughout Ka Roy’s career, which is just peaking, he has always spoken for and in behalf of labor, the sector closest to his heart, and has learned to serve selflessly.

Ka Ramon is glad Ka Roy has not resigned from the FFW. He believes “we still need his guidance and cooperation.”

Ka Roy made a vocation out of trade union organizing and treated the advocacy of labor as a personal cause. In the broader society, he has joined the struggle for good governance and a number social causes.

“His dedication not only to his children, but also to the cause of labor and a just, free and humane society,” endears him to one of his staff, Ms. Raquel Arpoja, now PSI officer-in-charge. She also recognizes his “passion and commitment to eliminate child labor” making him an “effective mouthpiece for the cause.

To emulate Ka Roy or better his accomplishments means abiding by the key characteristics he set out to make good labor representatives: *keep the interest of workers in mind; study and prepare endlessly; and, articulate these effectively.* Not to mention, get a good dose of media exposure!

Ka Johnny gets BATU top post anew

FFW President Emeritus Juan C. Tan was re-elected for another term as BATU President.

He initially declined the nomination for health reasons but was prevailed upon to reconsider to "maintain unity within BATU". Once he accepted the nomination, the ensuing elections became mere formalities.

Other FFW leaders elected to the BATU Executive Committee were: FFW National President Ramon Jabar, Vice-President for Southeast Asia; TF VIII Chair Ernesto Verceles, ASIAFEDOP President; Mr. Joseph Strachan, ATF-MIG President; and, FFW Women's Network (FWN) Chair Janet Dellaban, BAWC Chair.

Ka Johnny also served as World Confederation of Labour (WCL) President in the 80s.

Concurrent WCL Confederal Secretary Nicetas Lucero, whose term expires after the WCL Congress in October this year, was appointed BATU General Secretary.

Completing the FFW contingent as official delegates and participants to the Pre-Congress Training and Conferences were: Atty. Allan Montaña, National Vice President; Ms. Grace Savella, VP for Visayas; Mr. Jose Cayobit, National Treasurer; Ms. Ma. Teresa Montejo, Board Member-at-Large; Mr. Orlando Marcos, TF IV Chair; Ms. Nelia Saldua, FWN Vice Chairperson; Mr. Antonio C. Asper; and, Ms. Elizabeth Navarosa.

BATU holds 14th Congress in Bangkok

With the theme "Shaping the Global Environment Towards a Just and Humane Society," the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionists (BATU) held its 14th Congress from 26-28 July in Bangkok, Thailand.

Delegates to the Congress, representing affiliated National Organizations and Trade Federations (TFs) across the Asian region, including the Philippines' Federation of Free Workers, approved a five-year Policy and Program of Action anchored on responding to the social consequences of globalization that has accelerated a global "race to the bottom".

"The Congress approved a Plan of Action that will lead towards a new kind of trade unionism: the Trade Union-Social Movement (TUSM)," says FFW President Ramon Jabar, reelected as one of three BATU Vice Presidents, representing the sub-region of Southeast Asia.

The plan zeroes in on areas of action such as: human resource development; promotion and protection of labor; organizational strengthening; reinforcing trade action; self-reliance and social development; and, women empowerment.

The BATU shall also pursue policies that will:

- Restructure trade unionism and reorient its traditional services;

- Promote social integration;
- Provide adequate social protection in CBAs and laws, and advocate for and undertake independently or in collaboration with different institutions economic and social development programs or projects;
- Strengthen mechanisms for social dialogue to ensure workers' and people's participation in decision-making and implementation of policies and programs affecting their lives, work and interests.

Meanwhile, the Congress passed a resolution to strengthen the BATU structure. Thus, BATU delegates created the position of General Secretary that shall assist the President in the daily operations of BATU.

The Resolution also establishes a Management Committee that shall make decisions in the general interest of the Brotherhood, in between meetings of the EC.

Gracing the Opening Program of the BATU Congress were Mr. Yasuyuki Nodera, International Labor Office Director for Asia-Pacific and Mr. Willy Thys, WCL Secretary General.

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