



FREE WORKERS



Gains of SDP, FFW's springboard

We can not help but feel overwhelmed by the deep appreciation of our efforts and the overflowing support for the continued existence of the Substantial Democracy Project.

Delegates to the third National Conference on Authentic Workers Participation, who were among the most active and dynamic participants to activities spearheaded by the SDP over a four-year period, could not have made a more flattering evaluation of the Project.

A significant number valued most the advocacy they have done through the mainstream media, particularly the radio interviews of FFW members by well-known anchorpersons of regional and even national radio stations on primetime.

The SDP, according to other delegates, has helped them establish contacts with city councils and have found windows to lobby for workers' rights in the local level. They have, in fact, forwarded resolutions to the local legislature and local government agencies and are starting to lobby within the structure of the same.

Still, others recognize what the Project has done to train them in organizing and conducting programs and activities like a symposium, despite limited time to do hands-on preparation for such.

These and other heart-warming stories that give collective pats to the back of project implementers abound. These are the supreme commendations for they come from the midst of the grass

roots, the very clientele the Project meant to serve.

"In a span of four years, the SDP conducted 155 activities for the four areas of the project, or an average of 3 activities per month," SDP Project Officer Ephraim Guerrero said in a report presented before the conference delegates. These areas are Popular Education and Development Communicaton; Legislative and Policy Reforms Advocacy; Capability Building for Broad-based Participation, and Project Administration.

He also emphasized that the gains that the project had achieved can be used as springboard for future programs of the FFW on workers political empowerment.

How we wish things would not end. But the Governing Board has resolved since the end of last year, to retire the Project. Thus, we have come to a close.

While this is goodbye, it does not mean the end—at least for what the SDP has modestly contributed

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NOT WANTING FFW members weigh and measure the SDP.

to the fulfillment of the aspirations of the Federation. Work which used to be done by the SDP will be diversified to the other departments and offices of the Federation.

The Research, Policy Development and Advocacy and Information Office (RPDAO) which the FFW 21st National Convention sought to create, will be established, doing some of the work the SDP will be leaving behind.

But, much as many members and some close friends of the FFW would like the SDP to stay, the time has come for the Project to bid you all goodbye!

And so it is only fitting that we express our gratitude to all who have helped and guided the SDP in its short-lived life. Thanks to the Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond – Internationaal, SDP’s principal partner, which has been very supportive and considerate.

Thanks to the Steering Committee for the direction they set, yet allowing the implementers to use their creative juices and manage the project as they see fit.

Thanks to the FFW leadership for the guidance and the encouragement especially during turbulent times.

Thanks to the allies and friends we made, as part of the official networking job we do, and those we made in our personal capacities.

Most of all, thanks to the FFW membership, who have come to know the SDP and embraced the spirit of authentic workers participation. We are sure they will go on, even as the SDP has long been gone, for ultimately that is the measure of the Project’s success. ■ (JHC)

heard *on the radio nationwide*

HOT NEWS... Top radio station DZRH interviewed the Media Team of the RTOT Luzon 2. Afternoon program anchor Ms Ruth “Pangga” Espinosa fired questions live to Media Team Representatives Tony Bernardino and Au Singson. Let’s eavesdrop on their discussion on workers’ rights and the challenge to unionism today.

Ruth: Aren’t you having difficulties connecting the two? ...Christianity is usually related to the teachings of the church—of the need to follow the authorities and your superiors, humility and sacrifice. How will this jive with fighting for the rights of employees?

Tony: The FFW is distinct being the largest federation and being “Christian-based”, believing in a Supreme Being and in human rights.

Au: The FFW believes in democracy, human dignity and social justice.

Ruth: What challenges are faced by unions now? I know it is difficult to organize. Unionized workers represent only ten percent of the workforce. How does the FFW respond to that? How do you encourage employers to allow their workers to unionize?

Tony: We go beyond ensuring that rights of workers are respected. As a federation, we are moderate. We consider the capacity of employers (to give higher wages). We use collective bargaining as a tool. We strive for a win-win situation.

Ruth: Does that mean you hardly stage strikes?

Au: We don’t call for a strike without basis. It depends on what the situation calls for. We try to balance.

Ruth: What will you advise those who are afraid of organizing themselves?

Tony: They should not think that radical unionism—always taking to the streets, is the only type of unionism. The union gives a voice to the workers. It is a means to effectively communicate with the company, not to destroy it.

Au: Many companies nowadays choose to close shop when they find out that workers are being organized. That is why as a response, we also organize entrepreneurship seminars for these workers and organize the informal sector. The FFW membership is now getting wider because we are organizing the basic sectors, farmers, fisherfolks, vendors and other home-based workers. ■

SUBSTANTIAL DEMOCRACY PROJECT SCOREBOARD

Sub-Component Programs and Activities	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total Project Accomplishments
Popular Education and Development Communication	10	9	9	16	44
Legislative and Policy Reforms Advocacy	6	9	5	15	35
Capability Building for Broad-based Participation	2	8	13	21	44
Project Administration	4	10	9	9	32
TOTAL	22	36	36	61	155

Labor Code Amendments

WAITING *for* CHANGE

Since discussions on amendments to the Labor Code were initiated a few years back, the crafting of a new Labor Code has been left hanging.

Despite the delay, the FFW has been persistent in lobbying and advocating for the amendments to existing labor laws that will serve the interest of workers, their right to organize, to bargain collectively, to be free from discrimination and other core labor standards.

Of late, the Congressional Oversight Committee on Labor and Employment (COCLE), where the FFW is actively involved, has been facilitating discussions on proposed amendments. On Feb. 6, members of the FFW Commission on Social and Economic Legislation, Mr.



LONG PROCESS
It seems amending the Labor Code will take forever.

Tony Bernardino and Ms Myrna Abototo, attended the COCLE Technical Working Group Meeting held at the Senate of the Republic.

They presented to the Committee FFW's position on the issue, prepared

during the SDP-FFW Labor Code and FFW Legislative Reforms Agenda Workshop held in Manila during the same week. Here are the highlights of the position paper:

1. On the incidence of Unfair Labor Practices

If reforms can be done through amendments to the Labor Code on this, we would like to propose the following:

- a. Provide stiffer sanctions to the parties involved in the violations, i.e fines and imprisonment to the company (or union, if ever) president and persons acting in his behalf for ULPs.
- b. Institutionalize and strengthen educational programs for both labor and management.
- c. Strengthen processes for social dialogue between labor and management

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LEGAL TALK Bureau of Labor Relations Dir. Hans Cacdac (center) relays proposed amendments to the Labor Code as Labor Law stalwart Dean Froilan Bacungan and FFW Pres. Ramon Jabar listen.

Media Skills Training

of sound bites, simplicity and credibility

There are several ingredients that journalists are looking for when filing their reports. If you want to catch their attention and get your organization in the papers or on TV, think of good “sound bites”, explain your message in simple terms and establish credibility.



TALK TV Media Skills trainees simulate a live talk show on air.

Sound bites are short, catchy statements that summarize one’s message for the consumption of the audience. Writing with simplicity serves the purpose of making the public understand the message. Credibility is of course a requisite to being quoted by the Media.

These are some of the lessons FFW learned from the Media Skills Training for Advocacy of Trade Union Concerns held on 4-6 February at the Lotus Garden Hotel Manila.

Harnessing media skills became relevant, after the Federation found itself “omitted” from the news on the Labor Day and the President’s State of the Nation Address last year. Of

course, the Federation recognizes the power of media to influence public opinion, making it an important tool for advocacy of trade union concerns.

Good advice

Media practitioners Mr. Sammy Santos of the Philippine Star and Ms Weng Parungao of GMA-7 News were among the lecturers.

Mr. Sammy Santos said that the best way to learn writing is to keep on writing and showing your work to others for comments.

He said that a good press release is favorable for a reporter because it makes his job simpler. He advised

information officers of unions to establish rapport with reporters. One should know where the reporters usually are and at which time of the day they can best make use of statements or releases.

He also said one must develop the nose for news by reading the papers all the time. Discussing a journalist’s article to him/ her is the best compliment.

Press releases usually contain findings of surveys, alert of upcoming events and a presentation of an idea or position.

It is ideal to submit press releases on Saturdays and Sundays when reporters usually have less sources of news as most offices, including those of government, are closed on those days.

Getting into the boob tube

Ms Parungao said news programs allot each report an average of one and a half to two minutes airtime. Of this total, an average of five seconds of footage and audio is allotted per interviewee.

Therefore, one must not expect everything they stated to be captured by media even if they covered an hour-long press conference. People who speak to the press must consume one minute at most to articulate their message to the public. Thus, the importance of the sound bites again.

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of sound bites, simplicity ...
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For this training, the SDP-FFW collaborated with the Policy Review and Editorial Services, Inc. (PRESS), an NGO that helps trade unions, people’s organizations and other NGOs improve their media relations work and become competitive in communications.

Ms Lani Villanueva, PRESS Executive Director and staff Mr. Rey Abella gave inputs and facilitated the seminar.

The Basics of Communication Work

Ms Villanueva said that as a general unwritten rule, media write or tell stories that may be understood by a student in second year high school. She also emphasized the importance of establishing one’s image as an organization. Credibility after all, of the “sender” of the message must be established.

She explained that that writing is thinking clearly. She also reminded participants against using too much clutter or dead words when writing.

Managing a Newsletter

According to PRESS, every newsletter must have defined readership, goals, editorial policies, a regular publication date, a work plan, deadlines for drafts and final copies of articles and press work, budget, and distinct style/ look/ visual language.

To achieve the above, they suggest warm bodies e.g. one full time editor and an active pool of reporters.

Around 20 leaders of the Federation and Basic Sectoral Organizations representing Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao as well as some FFW staff took part in the specialized training.

On-cam workshops, writing press releases and evaluating newsletter kept the participants busy. (JHC)

WAITING for... from page 3 especially in unorganized establishments so that possible causes of ULPs can be eliminated and attended to.

2. On the NLRC

Common complaints regarding the NLRC refer to inefficiency and slow resolution/ disposition of cases filed. Also, its role in relation to appeals or petition for review of cases should be studied.

In terms of increasing its efficiency, the NLRC should:

- a. Provide additional and competent staff for arbiters.
- b. Increase the divisions of NLRC to 24 commissioners including chairperson, especially in Metro Manila.
- c. Strictly implement the 30-day period from the last submission of pleadings to settle the case.

In terms of its effectiveness:

The role of NLRC in relation to appeals and petition for review of cases should be studied in relation to the Court of Appeals so that its decision can be appealed to the

Supreme Court without passing through the Court of Appeals as another layer in the review process.

Further, the terms of office of the Commission members should be fixed.

3. On the Right to Strike

The FFW continues to affirm the right of the workers to go on strike. Thus, as the workers’ ultimate weapon, it should be strengthened instead of diluted.

We propose that unions can strike without filing a notice of strike when the existence of the union is being threatened or the right to self-organization is being trampled upon by the employer. In the same vein, the following amendments should be given a serious consideration:

- Strikeable issues should include violation of CBA, in effect deleting the “gross and flagrant” qualification,
- Delete free ingress/egress provisions in the Code,
- Strike area should cover establishments, warehouses, depots, plants, offices and other areas considered as satellites of the operation of the establishment,

- Delete the procedural requirement of 7 day grace period after strike vote,
- Finally, no union officer/member shall be dismissed from the company until a final decision on legality of strike.

On EPZs and special economic zones, workers’ rights including the right to strike must strictly be observed.

4. On The Secretary’s power to Assume Jurisdiction of labor disputes

The power of the Secretary of Labor and Employment to assume jurisdiction of labor disputes to protect national interest should be limited to those involving essential services defined by ILO and upon the request of parties involved.

For cases of company closure, the company should file a notice of closure and when it is engaged in runaway or transferred operation, the union can request assumption of jurisdiction, where the Secretary can decide. Meanwhile, the operation should continue, status quo. ■ (EVG)

the Trade Union *as a* vehicle *for* nat'l dev't

By Julius Cainglet

Not so many people get the chance to travel abroad, let alone, to the Holy Land. That it is why I felt so fortunate—bombings, terrorist threats and all—to get there and attend a month-long course to boot.

Honestly, my initial thrill, especially as a Catholic was limited to the opportunity to get to the very land where Jesus walked and taught Christianity. Little did I know that I've got much to learn from the experiences of trade unions and the people of Israel as well.

The first thing that hit me was that the course was organized by an institution run and managed by the Israeli trade union, Histadrut.

The PEOPLES International Institute is a testament to the successful social movement it spearheaded even before Israel as a state was established. Right off, I thought of this as a model for the “trade union-social movement” strategy of the Federation of Free Workers.

A model for TUSM

Histadrut was a social movement from the very start. Established in 1920 by young Jewish socialists from Eastern Europe, it is said to have applied Marxist principles in the context of Israeli realities back then.

From a membership of a few thousands in its inception, it grew into a national/ social organization deeply rooted to its membership. Ben Gurion, the country's first Prime Minister, was its first General Secretary.

Histadrut became a vehicle for national aims, economic aims, social welfare and cultural/ educational



COMMENCEMENT With the PEOPLES Academic Staff and MASHAV officers.

aims. The lecturers have argued that the trade union, as a part of the labor movement and the wider social movement, has a major role in the development process. The following is a wide range of non-bargaining activities of the trade union:

Economic

Enterprises

- Bank Hapoalim
- Hasneh (insurance company)
- Shikuh Oudim (housing)
- Solel Boneh (construction)
- Koor (industrial enterp)
- El Al (airline industry)
- Israel Airport Authority
- Ministry of Defense

Cooperatives

- consumer

- producers
- moshav
- kibbutz
- credit and savings
- transport
- housing
- marketing

Welfare

- Health services i.e. Kupat Holim (hospital)
- Mishan (Old age homes)
- Day care centers
- Family guidance
- Pension funds

Socio-cultural

- Education i.e. Mishlav, Amal (young adult education)
- Vocational training

Multi-sec mov't...
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Aside from the FFW, among the other organizations making up the Bangon Pilipino are: Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, Trade Union of the Philippines and Allied Services and Alliance of Filipino Workers representing labor; Employers Confederation of the Philippines, Federation of Philippine Industries, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Philippine Exporters Confederation representing business; Bishops-Businessmen Conference, Philippine Retailers Association, Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas and Bro. Mike Velarde's El Shaddai, representing the religious. ■

bangon pilipino *reform agenda*

1. Call on politicians and political parties to observe genuine statesmanship and politics centered on development concerns, and abide with the schedule for National and Presidential Elections in 2004 even as we are open to discussions on charter change.
2. Push for immediate electoral reforms to restore faith in the democratic process.
3. Push for professionalism, efficiency, accountability, and transparency in government service;
4. Undertake decisive measures to stop smuggling, tax evasion, graft and corruption, and other forms of economic plunder;
5. Intensify the creation of sustainable jobs through accelerated infrastructure development, mass housing, SME development, livelihood programs, and review and realignment of the national budget in support of job generation;
6. Promote sobriety and social responsibility in media reporting coverage;
7. Undertake a strong advocacy for patronage of Philippine-made products and services;
8. Promote a population program anchored on the principles of responsible parenthood, reproductive health care and respect for religious convictions;
9. Strategize and calibrate our current and future commitments to the WTO, AFTA and other trade agreements in accordance with our development needs;
10. Push for reforms in the administration of justice and enforcement of laws.
11. Promote constructive labor-management relations
12. Promote the empowerment of the barangays in the national campaign to curb lawlessness and to restore peace and order.

- Community centers
- Culture and art
- Women clubs
- Youth clubs
- Pensioners clubs
- Libraries
- Entertainment
- Sports

Urban affairs

- Municipal affairs
- Quarters committee

I was under the impression that Histadrut has been part of the everyday life of its citizens so much that they even used to own professional sports teams, organize concerts, set up libraries and dip their hands in

municipal affairs all at the same time.

They have even organized overseas Filipino workers, an official of the union in Tel Aviv reported. By the way, walking along the central bus station, I spotted a Filipino in almost every corner. Most are working there as caregivers of the elderly or domestic workers.

Learning from others

I got a lot of diverse insights from the experiences of co-participants who are unionists, government personnel and teachers from third world countries and countries in transition. I learned a thing or two about Ghana, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mauritius, Nepal, Nigeria, Serbia, Sri Lanka,

Suriname, Thailand and Zimbabwe. DOLE Conciliator Darrow Odsey was the other Filipino who finished the course.

Study trips, my favorite part of the course, gave me the opportunity to visit historical and religious sites in the Holy Land, while allowing me to learn about the state and its people.

The conduct of the course was made possible by MASHAV, the Centre for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Israel. My airfare was shouldered by the Bureau of Workers Activities, International Labor Office Geneva, upon recommendation of the Office of the Deputy Director, ILO Manila; and the President of the FFW. ■

Multi-sec mov't *calls for* political renewal

While the President's declaration not to run in 2004 solicited mixed reactions, several groups clearly drew inspiration from this "sacrifice". They have come together, rallying the citizenry towards political renewal.

Meet the "Bangon Pilipino" Movement.

Coming from labor, business, farmers, religious groups, media and the academe, Bangon Pilipino recognizes the urgent need to reduce poverty and generate employment to ensure economic survival, recovery and growth, under the principles of corporate governance and social responsibility, responsible trade unionism and social activism, and constructive social dialogue.

It also calls for bold reforms and gains inspiration from nationalism, morality and ethics, self-sacrifice, non-partisanship, rule of law and the basic values of truth and justice.

Bangon Pilipino also wants to develop a culture of patronizing Philippine-made products and services, in reaction to liberalization which has led to a lot of local enterprises closing shop.



BANGON PILIPINO Trade unions, business organizations and religious groups are the movers for political renewal.

Moratorium on politicking

FFW President Ramon Jabar, who sits as one of the members of the Bangon Pilipino Steering Committee said, "We urge the politicians to stop politicking and emulate the act

of sacrifice of President Arroyo to make this country move forward."

He added that FFW will fully support programs "to empower our people and ensure their participation in decision making." page 7



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