

03-26-2011 Solidarity Message to the 2nd FEFL GA

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The Partido ng Manggagawa salutes the Filipino Educators Federation of Louisiana (FEFL) on its second general assembly. It has been a year of struggles and victories since the founding of the FEFL. And it has fundamentally been due to your determination to overcome fear and apathy, and your resolve to fight abuse and exploitation at the hands of an illegal recruiter.

As the theme of your second GA emphasizes, there are big challenges ahead in order to build a stronger organization. The Partido ng Manggagawa reiterates its support for the FEFL and the cause of our fellow migrant workers.

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We look at your fight as a trailblazer struggle for Filipino migrant workers. It has the potential of inspiring the fight for dignity and justice of millions of OFW's. The fortitude you have shown in the face of adversity. The gains you have achieved despite the difficulties. The strong organization that you are slowly but surely building. The support of community organizations, progressive groups and mass media that you have garnered. These shows the way forward for Filipino migrant workers and groups.

Your inspiring struggle and the dire plight of migrant workers comes into sharp relief as OFW's from the Middle East to Japan confront the perils of working abroad. Tens of thousands of OFW's are fleeing unrest and disaster to return to the Philippines and the danger of unemployment and hunger. Still many remained at their host countries to risk the possibility of death in an adopted land rather than the grinding poverty of life in the homeland.

These events reveal once more the need to revisit the government's unwritten policy of promoting overseas employment to the detriment of generating decent jobs in the domestic economy. The government's adherence to globalization and foreign dictates have devastated Philippine industry and agriculture thus depriving Filipinos of jobs that pay decent wages and provide good working conditions. The government's consent to the termination and contractualization of some 2,600 jobs at Philippine Airlines is a case in point. Factory closures, job contractualization and cheap labor characterize Philippine economy thus providing the push factor for overseas employment. Yet recent events have shown the vagaries and hazards of deployment abroad. Not to mention the well-documented social costs of labor export.

Still the freedom of workers to seek better jobs in other countries is a right that must be protected. The pursuit of greener pastures across the oceans is a right that workers must enjoy. Unfortunately under globalization it is a freedom that is being restricted by the immigration policies of advanced countries. While economies are liberalized to allow the free flow of goods and capital, labor migration is subject to protectionist regulations. The hypocrisy of globalization as a development model is exposed in this double standard.

Thus migrant workers and workers in the Philippines must share the strategic mission of reforming our country's economic and labor policy even as we join hands in the urgent fight for better working conditions for all workers, both at home and abroad.

Signed: Renato Magtubo
Partido ng Manggagawa Chair