

## 07-18-2011 Statement on the Supreme Court ruling on Hacienda Luisita

Press Statement

July 18, 2011

Expropriation is the ultimate solution to Hacienda Luisita dispute

Partido ng Manggagawa on the Supreme Court ruling on Hacienda Luisita

In the Philippines where big landlords sway both economic and political powers in all levels of society, the idea of putting an end to the age-old old agrarian dispute at Hacienda Luisita through a referendum is neither just nor democratic.

It is a farce. It is a ploy. It is a travesty of justice.

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First, the referendum on stocks distribution option (SDO) expressed in the recent Supreme Court decision bolsters rather than weakens the Cojuangcos' perpetual control of their sprawling 6,435-hectare estate.

Second, Luisita farmers were actually denied justice when the Justices threw the issue back to them in clear breach of their constitutional duty to dispense social justice to the poor farmers.

Third, a referendum was never made a demand by both the farmers and workers of Hacienda Luisita, thus, can never be considered an exercise of democracy. What they want, on the contrary, is land distribution and not an SDO.

Fourth, the Cojuangcos' undeniable reign of power all over Tarlac, notwithstanding their present familial grip over Malacanang through PNoy, is what would make the referendum 'an initiative from above' and therefore a patently undemocratic political exercise.

The Supreme Court has clearly played mum and deaf on the farmers' and workers' cry for agrarian justice. But more than that, it turned a blind eye on the concept of social justice by wilfully taking the landlords' side in keeping the SDO scheme alive.

The SDO was no doubt a brilliant ploy by the Cojuangcos to evade agrarian reform. The Constitution, as well as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, neither mentioned nor referred to the SDO as another option for land reform. Thus, it is in the best interest of the Cojuangcos and for other landlords to make the SDO scheme lawful either by legislation or by judicial action. The Supreme Court may have consciously played into this game. And this is not acceptable!

The Partido ng Manggagawa stands for democracy and social justice, thus it supports the farmers' struggle for land and the democratization of the countryside. Agrarian justice through expropriation or nationalization of lands is a basic democratic demand for it is a struggle against land monopoly and tyranny by the feudal lords. And more importantly, it is about social justice because agrarian reform, in its true form, commands wealth redistribution thus an empowering tool for social justice and national development.

Unfortunately, agrarian reform in the Philippines was considered a 'centerpiece' program which, ironically, has never been at the heart of the past and present administrations. As such, even a less hostile form of expropriation (with compensation) mandated by law has never been enforced on big landholdings. Hacienda Luisita is a showcase. The reason is obvious. It cannot be enforced because landlords and the elite have been ruling this country since the first republic up to the present.

Without expropriation, Hacienda Luisita cannot be freed from the control of the Cojuangcos. Without expropriation,

Hacienda Luisita cannot be transformed into state or cooperative farms. Without expropriation, farmers will never enjoy the fruit of their half-century old struggle for land and justice.

Without expropriation, genuine agrarian reform will remain dead.